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CHUNG WING

THE CHINESE BANDIT KING



BY
Police Sergt Mallory



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CHUNG WING

THE CHINESE BANDIT KING :

OR,

An American Detective in China.

By POLICE SERGEANT MALLORY,

Author of "The Rusty Nail," "The Stolen Cane," Etc.

PROLOGUE.

THE history of Chung Wing, the most noted bandit king of China, is so full of realistic romance, that I have been induced to write the story of his life for the benefit of our readers. The incidents recorded in the following chapters are all founded on facts, the whole being translated from the official life, published in China a few years ago, and written by a noted Chinese historian.

The adventures of Chung Wing far eclipse those of any of the noted bandits of ancient or modern times in Christian countries, not only for their daring and brutality, but also for the ingenious manner in which all the schemes for robbery and murder were planned.

In the early part of the Chu dynasty, and during the reign of Wing Wong, a poor family, by the name of Chung, lived in the little village of Kin Loong, which is situated about one hundred miles north of Nankin. This family consisted of the mother, father and two sons. At the time we write the elder of the two boys, Chung Wing, was twenty years old, while his brother, Chung Sing, had just celebrated his seventeenth birthday.

Both were fine-looking young men, and were noted in the city for their great physical strength and honesty of character. Owing to the poverty of their parents they were both put to work early in life, and were thus unable to get any kind of an education. Chung Wing became a policeman under the magistrate of the city of Quin Lung Hien, and Chung Sing hired out as a farm-hand to a wealthy farmer in a neighboring village. Chung Sing being the possessor of an abundance of good looks, soon attracted the attention of the farmer's only daughter, a girl of some sixteen summers, who fell desperately in love with the tender of her father's stables. The lovers met clandestinely for some time, until at last the farmer found out about their meetings, and then he grew wroth and discharged the gallant Chung Sing. Not daunted by this act of the irate parent, the young man still contrived means of seeing his mistress, and finally proposed to her that they should elope and become man and wife. The girl yielded to his entreaties, and one day, while her father was away from home on business, she hastily gathered together all the jewelry and valuables that were in the house, including one thousand reals belonging

to the farmer, and then she and her lover went to Quin Lung Hien, where they were married. After the marriage was over, the runaways took up their residence with Chung Wing, who was living in a pretty little cottage on the outskirts of the town. Two years passed by, and the lovers were still living happily together, enjoying their stolen wealth. Chung Wing had succeeded in getting his brother a position as warden in the jail, and this required Chung Sing to be away from home the greater portion of the day and night.

In Quin Lung Hien there lived a young major by the name of Lee Po Tai. He was in the Imperial army, and was noted for his daring in the field of battle, and for his good looks, which made him a great favorite among the women. While in the city his principal hang-out was in a notorious tea saloon kept by a depraved woman by the name of Chang, who had for her friends many men occupying high positions under the government, and through their influence she was safe from being molested by the police.

One day when Lee Po Tai was passing Chung Sing's residence on his way to the tea saloon, he saw Mrs. Chung sitting at the window, engaged in making fancy work. He was struck with her beauty, and on his arrival at the saloon, he called Madame Chang aside and told her about his discovery, and said:

"Madame, if you will bring that young woman to this house and introduce her to me, I will give you one thousand teals."

After considerable parleying, the mistress of the house then said:

"I'll do it for that price if you promise me faithfully that if any disturbance should occur from her being brought here that you will stand by me."

"I'll promise that, and do anything else that you require done," replied the gallant major, as he drew a well-filled purse from his pocket and handed it to the woman.

The next day, while Chung Sing was away from home, Madame Chang called at his house, and was graciously received by Mrs. Chung, who, up to this time, had not been visited by any of the neighbors.

On entering the neat little sitting-room of the Chungs, Madame Chang said:

"I am one of your neighbors, Mrs. Chung, and I thought that as none of the ladies around here had called upon you, that I would come and see you, and invite you to my house, where you will be welcome at any time, and where you can spend a few hours while your husband is away and not feel lonesome."

"I have suffered terribly with *ennui* since I have been living here, and I have often wished that some one would call upon me. I don't know how I shall ever thank you for this visit, and you may rest assured that it will not be long before I avail myself of your kind invitation."

After a short conversation Madame Chang took her departure, congratulating herself that the young woman had fallen so easily into the trap set for her, and caught at the bait.

Early the next day, after her husband had left the house, Mrs. Chung, feeling quite lonesome, concluded to visit the charming Madame Chang. She dressed herself with the greatest of care, and without telling any of the servants where she was going, she went to the tea saloon, where she was graciously received by the proprietress, who did everything that she could to make her guest enjoy herself and feel at ease. Things were so pleasant that Mrs. Chung hardly noticed how time passed. In the afternoon the major came and was introduced to the visitor, to whom he paid the greatest attention. Mrs. Chung was perfectly infatuated with the officer, and when night came on she allowed him to escort her home. Mrs. Chung said nothing about this visit to her husband. This visit was followed by another and another, until finally nothing could induce her to stay at home after her husband left the house. Things went on in this way for some time, until people commenced to notice Mrs. Chung's frequent visits to the tea saloon, and commenced to talk about her intimacy with Lee Po Tai.

At last Chung Sing heard of his wife's actions, and he went immediately to her paramour, and demanded satisfaction. The major was sitting in his parlor on the evening that Chung Sing called at his house, and was enjoying a quiet smoke when the irate husband entered the room. The first thing that met the major's gaze, as he turned around to see who it was that was standing in the door-way of his room, was Chung Sing, who carried a dagger in his hand. When the wronged husband saw the major, he made a dash for him, and if it had not been that the officer dodged the blow as quickly as he did he would have been instantly killed in his chair. The major lost no time in returning the attack, and before Chung Sing could recover from his surprise, the major gave him a furious kick under the chin which knocked him senseless to the floor and broke his jaw. Not satisfied with knocking the wronged husband senseless and injuring him perhaps for life, Lee Po Tai commenced to kick the insensible man about the head and body, until at last Chung Sing's body was covered with bruises, he was bleeding terribly, and some of his ribs were broken. Then the major stopped his assault, and taking the injured man in his arms, he carried him to the front door, and then threw him into the street, where he was found soon afterwards, and carried home to his wife.

For days Chung Sing lay suffering with the lock-jaw, most of the time being unconscious. Lee Po Tai visited his mistress at her own house now, and one night, when she and he were sitting together, he said:

"My dear, Chung is lying very low now, and does not know of our meetings. If he should recover there will be another

row, and I think that the best thing that we can do is to put him out of the way."

"What would you advise me to do?" asked the faithless wife, throwing her arms around the major's neck and kissing him several times as she sat on his lap, and allowed his arm to encircle her waist.

"I have brought you this little powder," answered Lee Po Tai, drawing a small package from his pocket. "You can mix it with Chung Sing's medicine, and it will make short work of him."

The row between the major and Chung Sing occurred while Chung Wing was away from the city, and he did not hear of it.

When Lee Po Tai left his mistress that night, she went to her husband's room and administered the powder to him in a dose of medicine. In the morning Chung Sing was dead. The poison made the dead man's flesh turn black, so, to cover up all traces of her crime, the heartless wife had her husband's remains cremated. The ashes she had put in a leather bag, which she carried around in her pocket every place she went during the days of her mourning.

A few days after Chung Sing's remains had been cremated Chung Wing returned to the city, and on his arrival at the house he was astonished to see the blinds all closed, and still greater was his astonishment when he learned that his brother was dead. When Chung Wing entered the room where his sister-in-law was, he was surprised to see her making preparations to go out. He did not let her think that he suspected anything, and so he asked in a very pleasant manner:

"What did Sing die of?"

"Heart disease," answered the widow, pulling her mourning garments closely around her.

"Where did you bury him?"

This question seemed to confuse the guilty woman for some minutes; but at last she controlled her nerves and answered:

"Being a stranger here, and not having a plot in a cemetery, I thought that the best plan would be to have the body cremated. Here are the ashes."

She pulled the bag from her pocket, and, without any signs of grief, she handed it to Chung Wing. As she handed Chung Wing the bag one of her sleeves flew up, and displayed beneath her mourning garments a suit of gay-colored silk dresses.

"What does this mean?" demanded Chung Wing, as his eyes rested upon the gay apparel. "How comes it that you have these holiday dresses on in this time of mourning, and under your widow's weeds?"

Chung Wing now stepped up to his sister-in-law's side and tore the mourning garments from her back, displaying fully now the under-dresses. Mrs. Chung was so taken aback that for some moments she hardly knew what to answer. At last she recovered her composure and answered:

"Chung Sing died so suddenly, while I was visiting a friend, that when I arrived home I had no chance to change my dress, and so put on the mourning garments over these."

Chung Wing was too old a bird to be taken in so easily. His long association with all kinds of criminals had made him a good judge of character, and from his sister-in-law's actions he saw that she was not telling the truth, and that she must have some motive for having on these handsome garments. For a long time he stood thinking, as if trying to solve some difficult problem.

Suddenly his countenance changed, he looked at the bag an

instant, and then, with trembling hands, he untied the string, opened the neck of the bag, and examined the ashes. During the time that he had been on the police he had studied chemistry, more especially that portion of the action of poison upon the bones of the human system, and, the minute he examined the ashes in his hand, he saw that they were black instead of light in color, and he came to the conclusion that his brother had been poisoned. Saying nothing about his discovery to the woman standing before him, he replaced the ashes, tied up the bag, put it in his pocket, and, after saying good-bye to his sister-in-law in as pleasant a manner as the circumstances would permit, he left the room and proceeded to go to the prison, where he intended to analyze the ashes and make sure that he was not wrong in his suspicions. When he was going out of the front door he met a small boy coming up the steps, who asked:

"Is Mrs. Chung Sing in?"

"Yes," answered Chung Wing, and then he said to the lad:

"What do you want with her?"

"I have a note for her."

"Let me see it."

The boy handed the note to Chung Wing. He hastily opened it and read:

"MY DEAR DAUGHTER—Be sure and come this evening. Lee Po Tai and I will be the only occupants of the house, and we will have a general good time.

"Your god-mother,

"MADAME CHANG."

"So—ho!" exclaimed Chung Wing, when he finished reading; "things begin to dawn upon me now."

He turned to the boy and said:

"Come with me, I want to talk to you in a quiet place."

The boy obeyed, and Chung Wing led the way to a tea saloon, where he ordered refreshments served in a private room. When the things were brought in, and he and the boy were seated at the table, after the waiter had left the room, he said:

"Boy, do you know anything about Mrs. Chung Sing, and can you tell me anything about her visiting Madame Chang's saloon?"

"Yes," replied the lad; "she frequents the saloon every night, and meets Major Lee Po Tai there."

The lad then went on to relate all about the quarrel between Lee Po Tai and Chung Sing, and then said:

"I took Chung Sing home the night that he was so badly beaten by the major, and then Mrs. Chung told me to stay with her to help take care of the sick man. One night the major came and gave Mrs. Chung a powder, which she mixed in her husband's medicine, and the next morning he was dead."

"Are you sure of this?" asked Chung Wing.

"I could swear to it," replied the boy.

Chung Wing pulled some coins from his pocket, and then said:

"Take these, and tell nobody that you have spoken to me, or tell no one what you have just related. Take this note and deliver it."

Chung Wing then gave the boy the note that was directed to Mrs. Chung. The lad left the saloon, and then the policeman went to the prison, where he intended to see a friend of his, and ask his aid in bringing the guilty parties to justice. That night he intended to visit Madame Chang's saloon, and see for himself all that was taking place.

On entering the prison, Chung Wing met his friend Lum Kee, to whom he confided what he had discovered, and then asked:

"Will you aid me in bringing these human hyenas to justice?"

"I will do anything in the world for you," answered Lum Kee, "and if you say so, I will help you to punish them to-night."

"Agreed!" exclaimed the excited Chung Wing. "It is now dark, and I think the best thing that we can do is to go over to the tea saloon and find out what is going on."

Accordingly the two friends left the prison, and it was not long before they reached Madame Chang's saloon. They found the doors locked, and the front of the house enveloped in darkness.

"Let's go around to the back," suggested Chung Wing.

They found little difficulty in reaching the back of the house, and discovered that a bright light was burning in one of the rooms on the ground floor. This room had a window facing a path which led along the side of the house. The two policemen approached the window, the lattice work of which was covered with heavy oil paper, in the place of glass. This paper was so thick that at night nothing could be seen without, and it thus saved the two friends from being observed by those in the house. Chung Wing noiselessly approached the window, and dexterously bored a hole in one of the panes with the point of his dagger. He looked through the hole that he had just made, and a sight met his gaze which fairly made his blood boil in his veins. He turned to his companion, whispered something into his ear, and then the two went to the front door and rapped.

"Suey, ah?" ("Who is that?") asked Madame Chang, as she hurried to the front door of the saloon.

"A customer who is very hungry and desires some refreshments," answered Lum Kee.

"The place is closed for the night," said Madame Chang.

"I will give you double price for the accommodation," urged Lum Kee.

A short silence followed, and it seemed as if the proprietress was weighing the matter in her mind.

"Are you going to let me in?" queried Lum Kee, who was growing impatient.

"Yes—all right," cried Madame Chang, and then at the same time she commenced to draw the numerous bolts that fastened the door.

Chung Wing and Lum Kee had drawn their glittering swords from the cases at their sides, and waited anxiously for the door to open. At last Madame Chang opened the door. She no sooner did so than Chung Wing pounced upon her and drove his sword completely through her body. The woman fell to the floor without uttering a word, gave a heavy sigh and breathed her last. So quickly and noiselessly was this done that no one in the house was aroused, and Chung Wing and Lum Kee entered the saloon, after closing the door, without any one being aware of their presence. They threw the lifeless body of the proprietress into a corner out of the way, and then crept towards the room where the major and his paramour were enjoying themselves. Chung Wing gently rapped at the door. Mrs. Chung thinking that it was Madame Chang came to the door and opened it. Before she could utter a word of surprise, Chung Wing swung his sword around and severed her head from her body. The head rolled to the major's feet. Lee Po Tai took in the situation at a glance,

bounded to his feet, grasped his sword and engaged both Chung Wing and Lum Kee in deadly combat. The major was a skillful swordsman, and for a long time he managed to keep his assailants at bay. He and Chung Wing were wounded in several places, and the blood flowed in streams upon the floor.

Both being powerful men, the loss of blood did not seem to affect them any. The table, chairs, and every bit of furniture in the room was overturned and smashed to pieces. Clang, clang, clang, went the swords. Thrust after thrust was made and dodged. The major was being hard pressed, and he fought like a furious tiger at bay.

"Take that, you dog!" cried Lee Po Tai, as he made a lunge at Chung Wing, who met the stroke half way with his sword and warded off the blow. Before the major could resume his guard, Chung Wing swung his sword around several times in the air, and then, with all the strength that he could command, he allowed the blade to descend upon Lee Po Tai's head, and cut it and the neck completely in two. With a groan the massive frame of the major sank to the floor. Not satisfied with killing their antagonist, Lum Kee and Chung Wing now set to work to chop the body in pieces. When they got tired of their bloody work, Chung Wing and his companion left the room and went into the saloon, where they sat down to eat some lunch, after they had washed off the blood from their swords and bandaged up their wounds.

"Lum Kee, you know as well as I do, that the Chu dynasty is on the decline," said Chung Wing, as he took a drink of wine, "and that its subjects are on the verge of another bloody war. The soldiery are all cowards, while the officials are all fiends and tyrants. Men like you and me, who fear not death, and who are used to hardships, if we properly combine our forces, we can live like kings and hold the empire in a state of fear."

"How can we do it?" breathlessly queried the excited Lum Kee, who was listening attentively to all that his companion was saying.

"I will tell you in a minute," taking another drink of liquor, Chung Wing continued: "You see this terrible work of destruction around us? Although these wretches richly deserve the punishment that we have administered, still, at the same time, we had no right to kill them, and if we are captured or give ourselves up to the authorities, we will be tried for murder. If we should be convicted we may have to suffer death, or perhaps be imprisoned in a dark dungeon, or, still worse, be transported to the wilds of Tartary, to be beaten to death. I propose that we leave this place to-night and join the band of brigands under the famous Queen Sau ur Neau."

"Capital—capital!" cried Lum Kee, bounding from his chair and clasping the outstretched hand of his companion. "I have been thinking of this very thing for a long time, but never had the chance of going to the Himalayas."

The two men now ransacked the house, and after packing up what valuables they found, they started on their journey without losing any more time.

About this time the western slope of the great Quien Lung range of mountains, for a distance of about fifty miles, was greatly feared by travelers, owing to the frequent disappearance of men of wealth, who were journeying through the region. These disappearances were accounted for in one way and another, but none seemed to be able to account for them correctly. Poorly-clad travelers passing through the mountains were never molested, but the rich very seldom or never returned, or if they did, after a great while, they were always

secret about what had happened, and what they had seen and heard.

Chung Wing and Lum Kee succeeded in joining the great Sau ur Neau's band. After a time the queen fell in love with Chung Wing, and after murdering her husband, she married the ex-policeman and had him crowned king.

CHAPTER I.

CANTON EXCITED.

THE streets of Canton were packed with a mass of Mongolians, whites and blacks. All were hurrying to and fro, talking excitedly, as if something had happened which interested every one in the city. It seemed as if all the inhabitants were abroad. Even the lanes and alleys were full of people, and around the public squares and buildings the Imperial troops were gathered together in full force. The American man-of-war "Tuscarora" was in the harbor, and had her guns pointed on the city. Most of her officers were on shore, with a large number of men, on this memorable morning, the 12th of April, 1858. A fearful massacre of the white population had occurred the night before, and this was the cause of the excitement of the populace. The Chu dynasty had fallen, and the outer provinces were in a state of revolution. Up to this time Canton had remained undisturbed, and it was hoped by the inhabitants that the unruly hordes would not come near the city. Suddenly it was whispered abroad that the famous bandit king, Chung Wing, had been scouring the country, and that it was likely that he and his band would visit the city during the day. He arrived before any preparations could be made to try and arrest him. He swooped down on the American and English quarters of the town, robbed and plundered the houses, and then massacred the helpless women and children, and before assistance could arrive he succeeded in making his escape, with all the plunder, and one captive.

This captive was a young woman of about eighteen years old, the highly accomplished and only daughter of a very wealthy merchant, whom the brigands had murdered, and the acknowledged queen of beauty of the American colony.

Juanita Lloyd's society was greatly sought after by all the beaux of the place, both English and American. She gave her preference to a young man in her father's employ by the name of Armand De Witt. It is unnecessary to say that Armand loved his employer's daughter, and lavished on her every affection. When he heard of Juanita's disappearance he was almost frantic, and this, coupled with the murder of her father, made him determined to follow up the bandits, and have them captured and punished.

Armand De Witt was a young man of about twenty-five years of age, of medium height, with very light hair and eyes, and from his clear-cut features one could see that he possessed not only ability, but a great deal of determination, which helped him in overcoming every difficulty which surrounded him.

When Armand De Witt heard of Mr. Lloyd's murder and of Juanita's abduction, he applied to the city government for aid, but the officials would not listen to him, and he was compelled to leave the City Hall unsuccessful and baffled.

Every minute was precious to him. He thought of the American man-of-war in the harbor, and went and saw the commander.

The officer listened to his story, and when he had finished the commander of the "Tuscarora" said:

"Mr. De Witt, I am willing to give you all the aid that I

possibly can; but it will be impossible for me to give you any of my men to follow the brigands into the heart of the country."

"What would you advise me to do?" asked Armand, in perplexity, now that he saw that he could not receive aid from his own countrymen.

"I hardly know what to advise," answered the commander. "You say that the Chinese government officials have refused to help you. I will see what I can do with them to-morrow."

"But to-morrow will be too late, I am afraid."

"It is the best that can be done."

"Well, I'll wait until to-morrow," said Armand, as he shook hands with the officer, and went back to his office, feeling low-spirited, and as he sat down at his desk it seemed to him as if a heavy weight had been placed on his heart.

He bowed his head on his hands, and was lost in deep thought when the office door was opened, a gentleman entered and stepped to his side. So intent was he in thinking that he did not notice that any one was standing by him.

The visitor was a man of about forty years of age, of medium build, and of a very dark complexion. He waited some time to see if Armand would notice him, and finding that the young man did not look up, he said:

"Is Mr. De Witt in?"

Armand, who did not expect any one, now looked up with a start, and stared at his visitor with a look of surprise. He recovered his composure in a few minutes, and then he replied:

"My name is De Witt. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"My name is Joseph Clinton," answered the man; "I arrived in Canton this morning by the steamer 'Great Republic' from San Francisco. I am a detective by profession, and, hearing of the massacre and your loss, I came to offer my services to you."

"You have just come in time, and I shall be only too glad to accept of your kind offer," said Armand, as he handed his visitor a chair.

He then related to the detective all the details of the massacre, and of his unsuccessful attempts to get assistance from the government.

"I see now," said Joseph Clinton, "that we need hope for no support from any one—all we can do now is to go to work ourselves, and try and rescue Miss Lloyd from the hands of these fiends."

"I am willing to start immediately if you say so," said Armand.

After considerable time spent in talking over different plans, they agreed to start after the brigands that evening.

Joseph Clinton, or Clint, as he was more familiarly called in San Francisco, was noted on the Pacific coast for his ability to solve the mystery surrounding any case that he took hold of. He had lately succeeded in arresting a whole band of highwaymen, that had proven a terror to the inhabitants of Lower California; after this exploit he had concluded to take a trip to China to recuperate his health, and he arrived just in time to hear of the bloody massacre. Being of an adventurous nature, he decided to call on Armand De Witt, when he heard of Miss Lloyd's abduction, and to see what he could do in the way of effecting the young girl's rescue, and bringing the fiends to justice. Having had a great deal to do with the Chinese in San Francisco, he had become a complete master of the language, and this knowledge helped him a great deal.

Armand De Witt also spoke Chinese proficiently, and so the two men were able to travel through the country without the aid of an interpreter. Armand and the detective went to dinner together, and when they were through the clerk said:

"Mr. Clinton——"

"Don't call me that," broke in the detective, "call me simply Clint; it will sound more natural."

"Well, Clint," said Armand, laughing, "I feel as if I had known you for years."

"Armand—I'm going to call you Armand—I can say the same about you. We will be compelled to suffer much hardship in what we are going to undertake."

"I am willing to suffer anything, providing we can succeed in rescuing Nita," Armand answered.

"Are you acquainted with the country?" asked Clint, when they were about to leave the dining-saloon.

"Thoroughly," replied Armand. "I have traveled a great deal through the provinces."

"That will help us considerable. I have bought some maps, and with these, and your knowledge, I have no doubt but what we will be able to get along all right. We had better go to your room now, and prepare to start the minute it is dark."

The detective and Armand now went to the room, where they had their heads shaved in the Chinese fashion, and queues attached to their back hair. When this was done they dyed their skin, and then dressed in the costume of the natives. When they had finished dressing no one could have told but what they were Chinamen. They had bought two fleet horses that afternoon, and a number of pistols, which they placed in the belts under their blouses. When everything was ready, Clint and Armand mounted their steeds and rode out of the city. For days they traveled without seeing anything of the bandits. They were traveling in the right direction, however, and they hoped that before many days would pass that they would be up with Chung Wing and his gang.

About a month after they had started from Canton, after riding all day through the scorching sun, Armand and Clint arrived at the little village of Tau Guin. The weather had been so pleasant that most of the time they had camped out during the journey, and had thus far saved considerable money that they would otherwise have spent for hotel fares. It being a very warm day, they concluded to camp out for the night in a little grove on the outskirts of the village. Clint and Armand selected a spot under a large, shady elm, and laid down for some time to rest their tired limbs before they prepared to get anything to eat.

While they were resting and talking together, an old farmer came up and asked where they were going.

"We are going through the mountains," answered Clint.

"Sir," exclaimed the old man, "with a startled look upon his face, 'have you not been told of the dangers that lurk in those mountains?'"

"What dangers?" asked Clint, appearing to be surprised.

"For the past four years," answered the farmer, "well-dressed travelers have been seen only to go towards the mountains, but have never been seen to come back."

"We are going to risk our lives, then, but we are compelled to go through the mountains," said Clint.

"I see you are brave men," said the old man, "but I think you are foolish if you go forward. Whole regiments have been known to have been sacrificed at the mouth of a mysterious cave about nine miles from here."

"Who is it that does this?"

"I don't know—no one knows. In fact, it is supposed to be the work of the devil and his hosts."

"There must be a whole army of devils then," said Clint, with a laugh. "Since you have been so kind as to tell us about this mysterious cave, I am only the more curious to know what power there is that lurks therein. We will push on to the mountains now, so that we may reach the cave before night."

"I have warned you," said the old man, with a serious look upon his face.

"For which warning I am greatly obliged," said Clint, as he and Armand arose and prepared to mount their horses. "Accept this as a token of our regard." The detective handed the old man a *teal*, and then he and Armand rode away in the direction of the mysterious cave.

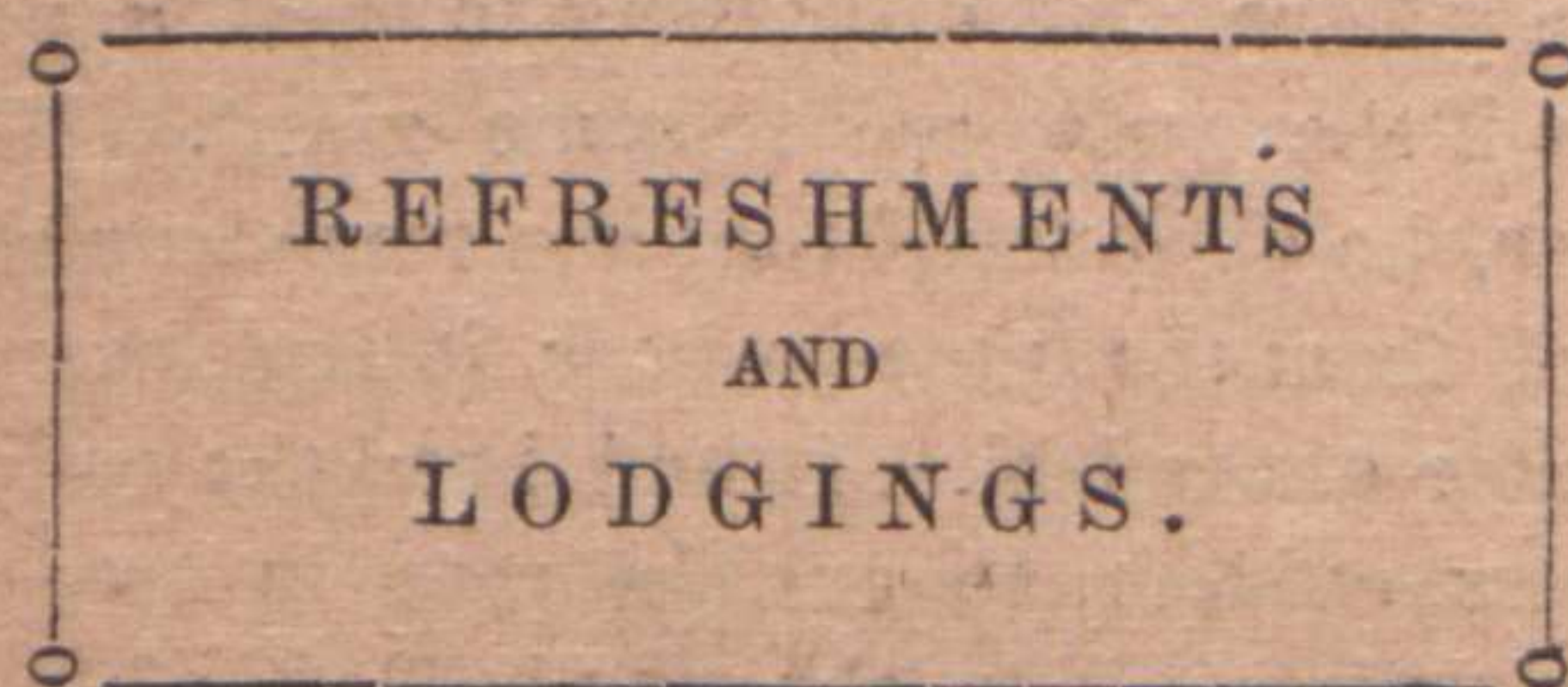
"Do you know, Armand," said Clint, as they rode along, "that I think that we have struck the robbers' stronghold at last?"

"I hope so, at any rate," replied Armand.

"I think that the best plan for us to pursue, will be to join the bandits—if the opportunity is offered. Then we will stand a better chance of rescuing Miss Lloyd, and we can then become familiar with their ways and manner of working. When the opportunity offers itself we can escape."

"I'm willing to follow you any place you go," answered Armand.

About dark they arrived at the base of the mountain, and soon discovered the mouth of the cave about which they had heard so many terrible stories. After consulting together Clint and Armand concluded that they would not do anything that night, but wait until morning. They tied their horses to a neighboring tree, and prepared to find a place where they could camp for the night. As they were looking around, Clint suddenly spied a hut, built on a plateau about two hundred feet from where they were standing, and discovered a young girl standing in the door. As they drew nigh to the house they discovered that a sign was swinging from the side of one of the windows, on which was painted in large letters:



"Have you anything to eat within?" asked Clint, as he came up to where the girl was standing.

"Come into the sitting-room, and I will go and call mother," said the girl.

The two men followed the girl through a long and narrow passage. They went on for nearly two hundred yards, and it seemed as if they were entering the very center of the mountain. At last the girl stopped before a door, and ushered them into a large room and then disappeared. When the child had left the room, Clint examined everything carefully, and then whispered to Armand:

"Cock your pistol and prepare for any emergency."

"All right," answered Armand; then he said, after he examined the furniture in the room: "This looks like an apartment belonging to a palace."

"Yes," replied Clint, "and still at the same time it has the appearance of a den."

The walls of the room were inlaid with fine lacquered work. Handsome silk banners hung here and there. The ceiling was elaborately frescoed, and from the center was suspended a gold chain, on the end of which was attached a silver lamp. The lamp was in the shape of a horn, with small indentures in the side, in which were inserted brilliant stones. Armand examined this, and exclaimed in surprise:

"Look, Clint, these are diamonds."

"Don't express any surprise at what you see," cautioned the detective; "keep a cool head, and be careful about what you say."

Before Armand had time to say anything, a beautiful-looking young woman presented herself before them. She eyed the men closely, and then said:

"Good-evening, gentlemen. Do you want refreshments or lodgings, or both?"

"We want both," said Clint, "and if you will give us a private room and serve our meals there, we shall be greatly obliged."

"It shall be as you wish. Do you want a lunch or a regular dinner?"

"A regular dinner," answered Clint, and he pulled out a bag filled with gold and offered the woman a *teal*. As he did so, he noticed the expression of her countenance closely. Her eyes sparkled as she spied the bag of gold, and after she had placed the piece in her pocket, she looked longingly towards the place from which it had been taken.

"I have only a few meat puddings," said the woman.

"You can give us some of those and some wine," answered Clint.

The woman now commenced to get ready a large wax-candle, which was placed in a brass candlestick, the base of which was ornamented with snakes and lizards. After she had lit it she turned to the men and said:

"If you will have the goodness to follow me I will show you to your rooms."

To the surprise of both Armand and the detective, the woman picked up the candle and walked straight up to the side of the wall of the room, and commenced to run her hand up and down a picture as if she were brushing dust off of the surface. After she did this several times, a small door swung open and displayed to sight a narrow pair of iron stairs. On both sides of the stairs were massive walls of solid rock. The detective and Armand followed the woman up the stairway, until after they had gone up about one hundred feet in the air, when their guide ushered them into a room, and deposited the candle in the center of a large table, which was made out of stone and looked as if it had been hewn from the mountain. The floor was covered with variegated matting, and here and there on the walls were hung the pictures of some heathen deity. In the center of the room, with the headboard toward the wall, was a bedstead, made of hemlock and elaborately carved.

"This is your room," said the woman. "I will tell my servants to bring up your dinner." With that she left the room. When she had left, Armand took a seat at the table, and looking straight at the detective, he said:

"Clint, I don't like the appearance of things about here. I think this room is nothing more than a trap. Everything about the house seems to be shrouded in mystery."

"We are in it now," Clint answered, with a look of unconcern, and as if he enjoyed the adventure, "and the only

thing for us to do is to keep our eyes open and not be taken by surprise."

"That woman is a beauty," said Armand, after a short time, during which both he and the detective were thinking deeply. "She is a perfect giantess in stature, and looks as if she could hold her own if she were attacked."

At this juncture a man entered the room bearing a tray, on which was the dinner and a demijohn of liquor. The plate of steaming pudding was placed in the center of the table, together with the liquor and two cups of tea, and a large bowl of boiled rice and curry. Both Armand and Clint were hungry, and they set to immediately to devour the repast. Clint had eaten two of the puddings, and was about to demolish a third, when he looked up from his plate and saw Armand holding a half a pudding in his hand, and critically examining the inside.

All of a sudden Clint commenced to taste something peculiar in his mouth, and he, too, set to work to examine the balance of his pudding. The meat in the pudding had a peculiar smell, and was chopped very fine. After a careful examination of his piece the detective quickly laid it on his plate, and motioning to Armand not to say anything, he turned to the man in attendance and asked:

"What kind of pudding is this?"

"Meat," laconically rejoined the waiter.

"What kind of meat?" queried Armand.

"I don't know," replied the man.

After this they said nothing, but ate the rice, and managed to make a meal off of that. When they had finished eating, the man took the dishes and the remains of the meal away, and they were left alone. Then Armand turned to Clint and said:

"Clint, do you think that the meat in those puddings was that of a human being?"

"Yes," answered the detective, "I am certain of it. Once, while I was spending some time in the Sandwich Islands, I was served with the same kind of food. You had better take a drink of this whisky to settle your stomach."

"How do you know but it is drugged?"

"It is straight enough. They have left us a large quantity, hoping that we will get drunk."

"We are in a den of fiends, sure enough," said Armand.

"I have no doubts now," replied Clint, "but what this is the abode of the bandits."

"For my part," said Armand, "I don't intend to go to sleep to-night, neither will I sleep on that bed. Look, Clint, at these indentures in the side."

With that Armand stepped to the side of the bed, and pointed out to his companion the marks of deep cuts in the sides of the bedstead.

"Those were made, evidently, with a sword or some sharp instrument," said Clint, "and the best thing that we can do is to avoid that region and watch during the night in some out-of-the-way part of the apartment."

For some time the detective and his companion sat talking, and then Clint arose and fastened the door through which they had entered the room. After he had done this, candle in hand, he searched every corner of the room, but failed to find any other opening to the apartment. In one corner of the room and at the foot of the bed he discovered a small aperture about a foot square, which he concluded was used as an air-hole after he had examined it carefully. When he was through he turned to Armand and said:

"I can't find any traces of there being any other entrance to this room except the door, which I have locked. However, we will watch all night and see if anything turns up."

Clint then emptied the demijohn of liquor on the floor and took the candle to the opposite side of the room from the opening that he had discovered, and after placing the light on the floor, he placed the demijohn over it, and this left the room in darkness.

The detective told Armand to sit down in the corner opposite to him and to prepare for any emergency. They then drew their swords from the cases and laid them, together with their pistols, at their sides. The room was shrouded in darkness, and they could not hear a sound that would break the silence of the night.

CHAPTER II.

THE BANDIT QUEEN.

FOR over an hour the detective and his companion sat in silence, and listening closely to see if they could hear any noise. At last Clint thought that he detected the sound of rustling leaves, and a moment afterwards he felt a cold current of air play against his face. Then he heard a sound as if a door had been opened, and a second afterwards this was followed by a heavy crash, which caused him and Armand to jump to their feet and grasp their swords. The crash that had startled them came from the direction of the bed, and sounded as if that piece of furniture had been cut in two by some sharp instrument. Following this blow a female voice exclaimed in great surprise:

"Ah ya!" (they are not here).

And then the room was brilliantly lighted from some unseen source. In a moment the detective's eyes became accustomed to the light, and he saw standing by the bed the form of a large woman, with her head completely obscured by a large hideous mask, on the top of which were burning a number of small lamps. Her feet were resting on cotton soles, which were attached to the ankles by a number of ribbons, in the same manner as sandals would be. Her dress was made of the skin of some wild animal, and only covered her legs, leaving the rest of her body bare, and displaying to sight a pair of arms that looked as if they belonged to some giant. When Clint's eyes fell on her, he discovered that she was struggling to pull a large sword from the place where it had been imbedded across the center of the bed. It had been the woman's intention, it was now evident, to cut the men in two while they were quietly sleeping. Now she was baffled in her cruel plan, and she was furious with rage. Looking at the foot of the bed for an instant, Clint discovered that the place where the small air-hole had been was now a large opening, in the center of which stood a dark-complexioned man, who held a large hatchet in his hand, and acted as if he were one of the woman's servants. Clint saw that there was not a moment to be lost, and after he had spoken a few words to Armand he lifted his sword over his head and rushed upon the she-fiend, who had planned his and Armand's death. The woman drew her sword at that moment from the side of the bed and leveled a blow at Clint's head, which the detective dodged quickly, and then engaged her in a close conflict. After parrying a few minutes he saw that his antagonist was very skillful with her sword, and that if he desired to escape he would be compelled to exert all the skill and strength at his command.

The man with the hatchet, seeing that his mistress was being hard pressed, now made a dash at the detective, intend-

ing to cut his head open. Before he could carry out his design Armand threw himself in front of the fiend, and, with a sweeping stroke of his sword, he cut the man's head off. He now turned and looked at Clint, who was fighting desperately, and had just received a wound in his shoulder. The sight of the blood trickling down his sleeve seemed to put more strength into the detective's blows, and at last he succeeded in inflicting a small wound in the woman's breast. When he did this the woman stopped fighting, and cried:

"Hold! You are a noble warrior, and my superior. I acknowledge your ability. This is the first time that Sau ur Neau has ever acknowledged this to any man. Your life is safe, and if you and your friend want to join my band, I will give you the office of grand chancellors."

The detective was glad that the woman had thus desisted, for his strength was rapidly giving way, and it is doubtful whether, even by Armand's aid, he could have conquered the famous bandit queen if she had continued to fight. When Sau ur Neau stopped speaking Clint said:

"Both of us shall be only too glad to join your company and accept the high positions offered. I might truly say that it was for this purpose, of becoming one of your soldiers, that we came here."

Sau ur Neau (or the mountain maid, as her name means when translated) now threw off her disguise, and the two men were somewhat surprised when they recognized her as the woman who had shown them to their apartment. The story of this woman's life, up to the time that the detective and Armand had entered her stronghold, was a very romantic and remarkable one. When she was an infant her parents, who were very poor, abandoned her in the mountains, to be eaten by the wild animals that infested that region. A tigress, who had just lost her cub, discovered the infant, and instead of devouring the child, she allowed it to draw the milk from her burdened breast. The beast was so much relieved by this that she caught the babe up in her mouth and carried it to her den, where she nursed it and treated it as if it had been her own young. For four years the child lived with the tigress, until, one day, when she and the beast were asleep in the valley, a hunter discovered the naked child, and thinking that the tigress would kill it when it awoke, he slew the beast.

This awoke Sau ur Neau, who, when she saw the blood running from her tiger foster-mother's side, threw her arms around the animal's neck and commenced to cry bitterly. When the hunter came up and tried to lift the young child in his arms, she bit and scratched with her fingers with all the fury of a wild animal. The hunter spoke to her, and found that she could not speak. He then took her home and gave her into the charge of his wife, who, after a great deal of trouble, succeeded in teaching her how to talk, and put comfortable dresses on her.

At first the wild girl would not allow any clothes to stay on her, but tore everything to pieces. At last she became reconciled to her fate—took to studying, and then, when she reached the age of fourteen, she could read and write proficiently. People called her the "Mountain Maid," on account of her being found in the mountains. She grew rapidly, and soon was larger than any man or woman in the village. The restraint of home life wore on her, and she yearned for the freedom of a mountain home. She bided her time, and one day, when the hunter's wife was sick, Sau ur Neau stole her foster-mother's bow and arrows and ran away to the mount-

ains, where she hid herself, and commenced to lead the life for which she had yearned so much.

One day, while she was hunting in the woods of the western slope of the Quin Lung range of mountains, she met a band of robbers, the chief of whom was a powerfully-built man by the name of Jow Zoon. She joined the band, and soon afterwards married the chief. Jow Zoon was looking for a cave where he and his men could live, and Sau ur Neau led them to the place which soon afterwards became such a terror to travelers. They obtained possession of the house of "refreshments" by murdering the inhabitants, and then built their mysterious caves in the center of the mountain, which made them secure from arrest, and helped them to baffle the assaults of the army of the Imperial Government.

After Chung Wing and Lum Kee joined Sau ur Neau's band, and after Jow Zoon had been killed, and Chung Wing became Sau ur Neau's husband and king of the bandits of the Quin Lung mountains, the numbers of the band was increased, and the raids upon the towns in the vicinity of the cave became more frequent, and the massacres committed more brutal. The brutal work of Sau ur Neau and Chung Wing held the inhabitants in a state of terror throughout the whole empire. The emperor had offered large rewards for the capture of the bandits, but up to this time no one had undertaken to arrest them.

After Clint had spoken to the bandit queen, Sau ur Neau dropped her large sword from her hand, and the handle fell on her foot and bruised it. This caused her to cry out with pain, and she limped to the side of the bed and sat down. Reaching out her arm, Sau ur Neau touched a little black spot on the wall, an alarm-bell rang, and a few minutes afterwards, a young woman entered the room and knelt at her mistress' feet.

"Bring me my yellow box," ordered Sau ur Neau.

She bowed, left the room, and in a short time returned, carrying in her hands a yellow box, oblong in shape, and about a foot long by four inches high.

The bandit queen opened the casket, and took out a small black instrument, the sharp point of which she applied for some minutes to the bruised foot, and then the swelling and bruises instantly disappeared. When Clint was about to ask the woman what it was that she had applied to her foot, she arose from the side of the bed, and said:

"Gentlemen, from this day forth, this shall be your home, and you shall be my grand chancellors."

She then turned to one of her servants, who had just come up-stairs, and ordered him to bring in two suits of clothing. When the clothes were brought in, Clint discovered that they were of the same material, and made in the same manner as those that were worn by the members of the Imperial Government at Nankin. After Armand and Clint had dressed, Sau ur Neau shoved the bed aside and motioned them to stand by her side in the center of where the bed had just stood. The bandit queen now rapped a dozen times on the floor with her sword, and cried out:

"*Turn kee low sow.*"

The place where they were standing gave away, and they commenced to descend slowly—into the center of the mountain. Down, down they went, for more than three hundred feet, and it seemed to Clint and Armand that their journey into the bowels of the earth was never coming to an end. Suddenly the platform came to a stand still, and they saw before them a magnificently furnished room, which was brilliantly

lighted. Sau ur Neau led the way into the apartment where two pretty maids of honor were waiting to receive her. The young women brought their mistress a handsome silk garment which was trimmed with diamonds and rubies, and this Sau ur Neau put on, and then placed a golden crown upon her head. When the maids of honor saw that Clint and Armand were in robes of state, they knelt before them and kissed their hands. One of them then arose to her feet and walked to the end of the room, where she slowly opened a large iron door. The minute the door was opened the sound of a number of voices shouting came to Clint and Armand's ears. Sau ur Neau beckoned them to follow her, and then led the way into a large hall, where her soldiers were awaiting her arrival with impatience. That which was now presented to Clint and Armand's sight, they had never seen anything to equal before. From the appearance of everything, one could easily imagine that one was in fairy land. The ceiling of the hall were inlaid with precious stones and decorated with paintings, while the walls were padded and covered with silk, on which were painted different scenes from the works of Confucius. The floor was paved with square blocks of silver and yade stones—at the end of the hall was a golden throne, which was erected on a platform made of yade stone, the steps leading to which were made of gold and ornamented with carvings.

On each side of the throne were two massive candlesticks made of silver, and inlaid with diamonds, rubies, pearls and a number of other different kinds of precious stones of great value. Sau ur Neau's band consisted of two hundred and seventy men, and fifty-five young women, all of whom were attired in a different-colored costume. The young women all carried banners made of silk, and when they saw the queen enter the hall they formed in line and prepared to escort her and her guests to the throne. A number of musicians who were sitting at the side of the throne, now commenced to play; the whole assemblage arose to their feet, and cheer after cheer rent the air. When Sau ur Neau reached the throne she pointed to two chairs which had been placed at each side of the steps and requested the detective and Armand to be seated. Silence now fell on every one present, and Sau ur Neau took her seat.

Each bandit had a distinct position to fill, the same as the members of the imperial household. The men were divided into four divisions or boards, each having a president, and were classified as follows:

First.—The Board of Domestics, which had full charge of the appropriation of any household goods which might be stolen.

Second.—The Board of Bullion, which had charge of the robbing of banks and the city treasuries.

Third.—The Board of Tautero, which had charge of the capture of great people, and holding them until a ransom was offered.

Fourth.—The Board of Yaw Koon Boa, which had charge of the planning of raids and the equipment of the men.

This last board was a very important one, and had for its president a clever delusionist, by the name of Chin Kurin. This man, it was said, possessed wonderful powers, and he could jump any wall, no matter how high it was, and land safely on his feet. He was a swift runner, and no one had ever been able to overtake him. This board also possessed another man whose skill was remarkable, and whose duty it was to plunder ships. He was able to live under water for hours, and for

this power his companions called him *Yu Zing* (*The Man-Fish*.)

At last Sau ur Neau broke the silence and said:

"Gentlemen, if you have any reports to make, I desire you to do so immediately, for I want to have prepared a grand dinner in honor of my two new *grand chancellors*, who are famous noblemen and soldiers from Canton, and who have consented to join our household."

After this speech those present cheered, and both Clint and Armand arose and bowed their acknowledgments.

The head of the Bullion Board now arose and said:

"I am sorry to report to your majesty the capture of So Moon, one of our ablest swordsmen, by the Foo Tai of Tam Chow Foo, while he and some others of our board were on duty in the city."

"I will make a note of this," answered Sau ur Neau, when the man had taken his seat, "and when Chung Wing gets back he will attend to it."

Chin Kurin now arose, and after a great deal of bowing and much flowery language, he said:

"While in Hau Chow to-day I carried off the viceroy's seal in mistake."

Sau ur Neau made a note of this also, and, seeing that there were no more reports to be rendered, she said, in a voice that was full of authority:

"The presidents of the boards will remain, the other members of the army are dismissed for the rest of the day."

Clint and Armand were surprised to see the men not make any motion to leave the hall, but, instead, turn their faces to the wall. When the men had done this, and remained in this position for a short time in silence, Sau ur Neau pressed a knob in the arm of the throne, and an instant afterwards fifty-four narrow doors flew open in the side wall which the men were facing. The queen then gave a signal, and the bandits marched out of the hall, two abreast, through the mysterious door, which closed again the minute after the last one had passed through.

No one was left in the hall now except the young woman and the heads of the boards. Sau ur Neau now led the way into the chamber which Clint and Armand had first entered, and from thence went into a spacious dining-hall, where a table was spread with all the delicacies of the season. This room was as elaborately furnished as the main hall, with the exception of the floor, which was paved with square blocks of gold, on which were engraven images and innumerable designs of flowers, etc.

This mysterious underground palace was erected at an enormous expense, under the supervision of two skilled architects who had been kidnapped from Nankin, and when it was completed they were put to death for fear that they might reveal the secrets if they were permitted to go free.

In this palace there were four large halls of state, seventy-two gorgeously furnished rooms, and three secret entrances besides the main entrance, where the little house of refreshments stood. These entrances were known by the following names:

First—*Ki*, or the world, which was the hut.

Second—*Shing*, or the alarm, which was at the top of Quin Lung, about two miles from the hut.

Third—*Au*, the secret, which was through the haunted cave.

Fourth—*Ming*, the reserve, which was in the forest near the village.

Besides the rooms that we have just mentioned, there were

also two large store-rooms, which were filled with goods, and valuables. The treasury contained over 2,000,000 teals, all this having been collected through theft and murder. The store-rooms were situated in a secret part of the mountain, and the knowledge of how to reach them was only possessed by Sau ur Neau, Chung Wing and the grand chancellor.

The greater portion of this ill-gotten wealth, which would have dazzled the eyes of a king, had been collected by Sau ur Neau, the woman who had been nursed by a tigress, the woman who possessed a heart of steel, and the woman who was never happy unless she was reveling in the blood of her victims. To show fear in her sight was a crime, and the person who was guilty of such an offense was instantly put to death. She loved Chung Wing and his friend Lum Kee, and it was this lack of fear that made her respect Clint and Armand.

The banquet was almost over when a great noise was heard at the outer door of the hall, and an instant afterwards Chung Wing and Lum Kee entered, followed by a number of bandits. Clint and Armand were introduced to the king by the names of Jo Ki and Hop Soon. Chung Wing expressed no surprise at meeting them, and he immediately took a seat by his wife's side at the table and commenced to eat. Chung Wing had a large appetite, and the cook of the establishment told Armand that the king had been known to eat five pounds of rice, three pounds of meat, and a lot of vegetables at one meal, besides drinking a gallon of wine.

Both the detective and Armand were astonished to see the amount of food this man got away with. It was nearly noon when the meal was over, and Sau ur Neau called two servants and had her new grand chancellors conveyed to a handsomely furnished apartment in the same corridor as her own. When the servants had left them alone, and after they had locked the door, Armand said to Clint:

"We have found the bandits, and are now members of Sau ur Neau's household; what next are we to do?"

"At present we can do nothing more than we have done, and we will have to wait until we become better acquainted with the mysteries of the palace."

"I would like to know where Nita is. I hope that fiend has done nothing to injure her. Clint, this suspense about her safety is terrible," exclaimed Armand, as he paced up and down the room.

"I don't think that any harm has happened to her," said Clint, re-assuringly. "Very likely the bandit has her in some one of these rooms, and intends to keep her, thinking that a reward will be offered by her friends for her safe return."

"If I could only think this way. I feel like going to work right away, and searching every room in this underground mansion."

"No, no!" exclaimed Clint, "you must not think of doing anything as rash as that. Leave everything to me, and I promise you that before many days have passed we will rescue Juanita Lloyd, and get her safe out of the reach of these accursed fiends."

"How can I ever thank or repay you for this interest you have taken in my affairs?" exclaimed Armand, as he took the detective's hand and shook it warmly. "You have helped me when others turned a deaf ear to my entreaties."

"I'm your friend, Armand. For the short time that we have been acquainted, I have grown to think as much of you as if you were my brother. Think no more of payment or gratitude, but look on what I do as a kindness rendered by your brother—Joseph Clinton."

The two men, who had grown to be such fast friends, now retired to their bed, and it was not long before they were wrapped in a sound slumber, from which they did not awake until almost midnight, when they were aroused by a loud knocking at their door.

CHAPTER III.

THE TWO CAPTIVES.

WITHIN fifty feet of the room where the detective and Armand were sleeping, was the apartment where Nita Lloyd and her cousin, Ella West, were held prisoners. Chung Wing had been attracted by the beauty of the two girls, and, knowing that they were thought a great deal of by the American and English colonies, he had carried them off, thinking that their friends would offer a large reward for their safe return. In the event of no reward being offered, it was the bandit's intention to make them members of his harem. At the moment that Armand and Clint were wondering where Nita was, she and Ella West were sitting in their prison, talking about their friends and grieving about the sad loss which they had sustained. The room in which the girls were confined was furnished in the same elaborate style as the main hall, with the exception that the floor was covered with silken rugs of variegated hues.

Ella was a girl of about eighteen, with large, dark eyes, and raven-black hair, which hung in large waving locks down her back. Hers was a disposition that grieved at the least provocation, while her Cousin Nita took things in a philosophical manner, and always looked on the bright side.

Ella and Nita were sitting side by side on a divan, and Ella was crying bitterly, while Nita was trying to pacify her.

"It is no use to cry," said Nita, as she placed her arms around her cousin's neck and kissed her several times. "I don't think the bandits will harm us, and I have no doubt but that our friends will do all they can to rescue us."

Juanita Lloyd's face shone with love as she tried to inspire courage in her cousin. Her eyes were large, expressive, and of a deep-blue color, reminding one of the fathomless depths of the dark-blue sea. A slight flush suffused her fair face. Her lips were well-rounded and expressive, and when she opened her mouth to speak two even rows of pearly-white teeth were visible. Her form was symmetrical, and was shown off to advantage by the close-fitting morning-wrapper which she wore.

"There, there, Ella!" she said, smoothing her cousin's hair back from her forehead; "dry your eyes, and don't worry any more. It will only make you feel miserable, and it will not help our condition. Be brave."

"I will try to, dear Nita," rejoined Ella, as she wiped her eyes and made a great effort to choke down the sobs that would arise in spite of all efforts. "If I only had your disposition I would be happy. Nothing seems to frighten you. You are brave, while I am a big coward."

"Ella, you are not a coward. You can be the same as I am if you only make up your mind to it."

The tears had all disappeared from Ella's eyes, and she was now looking bright, and apparently reconciled to her fate under her cousin's re-assuring words.

"I wonder what Armand is doing?" said Nita, after a short silence.

"No doubt he is searching for you," rejoined Ella.

"Do you know, Ella, that I dreamed last night that Armand was in this place, and that it would not be many days before I would see him."

"I only hope that your dream will come true."

"I can't explain the feeling, but then something seems to tell me that he is near at hand."

Click, click.

The two girls jumped to their feet. Some one was trying to unlock the door. Ella turned white, and clung to her cousin's arm, while Nita showed not the least signs of fear, but waited with her form erect, and eyes flashing, to see who it was that was trying to enter the apartment. They were not left long in suspense, for the door flew open and two men entered. One was Chung Wing, and the other his lieutenant, Lum Kee.

The bandit king stepped up to Nita's side, and said:

"I want you to write a note to your friends, and state that unless they pay us 150,000 teals you will be killed."

"That's a large sum of money," returned Nita. "I don't see why you should harm either of us."

"That is neither here nor there," rejoined Chung Wing. "You do as I order, or I shall be compelled to torture you until you give your consent."

"You can torture me, then," exclaimed Nita, and her eyes flashed with indignation.

"Oh, Nita, this fellow will surely do what he threatens," broke in Ella.

"Let him do it, then," returned the fair captive. "I would sooner suffer torture than to permit myself to aid this man in extorting money from our friends. No, sir, I will not do it."

"Then will you do it?" asked Chung Wing, turning to Ella.

"No, she will not," said Nita, answering with decision for her cousin.

"Then you will have to suffer. If your friends do not pay the reward I ask, I will first cut off your ears and send them to them, and then if I am still refused, I will cut out your tongue, and then, if you still live, I will put you both on a rack and tear you limb from limb!"

"You fiend, you, I defy you!" cried Nita, stepping up in front of Chung Wing, and shaking her finger in his face.

"You defy me?"

"I do!"

"Then we will give you a taste of something that will break this rebellious spirit in you."

"Nita," broke in Ella.

"Ella, show some spirit," said Nita.

This admonition seemed to inspire Ella with courage, and the frightened look which had o'ercast her face up to this time disappeared.

"I give you both one more chance," said Chung Wing. "Are you going to do what I ask you?"

"No!" answered both of the girls simultaneously.

"Lum Kee, call the guards," Chung Wing ordered. "I order these girls to be taken to the main hall, where, in the presence of the whole army, they are to be tied at the foot of the throne, and their feet beaten with rattans until they repent and are willing to do as I order."

Lum Kee gave a signal, and four stalwart bandits entered and seized Nita and Ella. They then bore them to the main hall, where all the bandits, the queen, and the two new chancellors were assembled. It was to summon the detective and Armand to the hall to see the punishments that the messenger had come to their room.

The captives were brought into the hall deeply veiled, and it was not until they reached the throne that Armand recognized who they were. After the veils were removed, and he

saw Nita, a thrill of joy bounded through his whole system, and it was as much as he could do to keep from rushing forward and embracing her. Armand and Clint were standing together now, and the detective whispered:

"Leave everything to me. I will see that the girls are not harmed. If we make one false step now we are ruined."

These wretches will carry out their fiendish designs," broke in Armand, who would have rushed upon the king and queen and slain them if it had not been for Clint, who saw that by such an action they would all be killed, and nothing would be gained.

"Strip the captives and bare their feet," ordered Sau ur Neau.

Nita saw that it would be useless to offer any resistance, so without protesting she allowed the men to strip her of her stockings. They did the same to Ella, and just as they were about to throw the girls on the floor to commence their cruel work, Clint stepped up close to the captives. The minute he did so the guards fell back, out of respect. The detective faced Sau ur Neau and Chung Wing, who were sitting on the throne, and said:

"Your most gracious Majesties, I would like to say a few words."

"What favor has the great Hop Soon to ask?" asked the queen.

"Agree to everything that these fiends ask," whispered Clint, in English; "friends are near."

Nita started with surprise.

Sau ur Neau did not notice that Clint had said anything to the captives. The detective now replied to the queen:

"Your most gracious majesty, these captives do not understand our laws. I can speak English, and if you will permit me I will explain matters to them, and then perhaps they will do what you desire."

"We grant you this request, and if the captive maids will yield for you, we will give them to Jo Ki and you to hold as prisoners until their friends agree to concede to our demands."

"I thank your gracious majesty for your goodness."

Clint now prostrated himself, and after he arose to his feet, he said to Nita:

"What is it they want you to do?"

"Write a note to my friends asking for 150,000 teals."

"Do it."

"I will."

The detective then turned to Sau ur Neau, and said:

"The captives consent to write the note."

"Then bring forth the paper and ink," ordered the Queen. The paper was brought forth and Nita took the bush in her hands and wrote in Chinese the note dictated by Chung Wing, asking for a ransom to be paid. When this was finished Sau ur Neau handed it to a messenger and ordered him to take it to Canton. She then said to Clint and Armand:

"We give these captives into your keeping. Now you can take them to their rooms. Here is the key, and we shall hold you responsible for their safety. When you have done this we want you to return to the hall, as we desire you to take part in the rescuing of one of our men who was captured by a magistrate a few days ago."

Clint and Armand took the girls by the arms and then led them away. When they were in the room Armand spoke for the first time as he caught Nita in his arms and kissed her.

"Nita, you need fear nothing now I am by your side, and will do everything in my power to help you."

"Oh, Armand, you don't know how glad I am to see you. Tell me how you got here?"

"Not now. I will tell you when we return to-morrow."

Armand then introduced Clint to the girls, and after a few minutes' more conversation they went back to the hall, where they found a number of the bandits making preparations for a journey. The detective and Armand were compelled to go with the raiding band, which consisted of four swordsmen, two athletes, Chung Wing, Lum Lee, besides themselves.

When all was in readiness, the band started out down the mountain-side toward Chung Chow Foo. Arriving at a place called Lai Yon, they saw grazing in an open field a drove of horses which belonged to the Imperial camp, which was about three miles distant. Chung Wing ordered his men to capture a horse apiece, and, when all were mounted, the bandits started off again on their journey without being discovered.

Within two miles of Chung Chow Foo the bandits dismounted in a small woods, and then Chung Wing addressed them as follows:

"Men, one of you must take these horses into the village, stand before the jail, and pretend to offer them for sale. I will enter the jail-yard in the disguise as an eye-doctor; the rest of you are to assume various disguises to suit yourselves, and are to gain admission to the jail under different pretexts. I desire you, Lum Kee, to get into a row with some one and to be arrested. While the guards are taking you into the prison-yard, the rest of us will bolt the gates, and then attack the prison-keepers."

With this they all started out in different directions towards the town, leaving Clint and Armand in the woods to watch some valuables. After Chung Wing had gone, Armand said to the detective:

"Can't we prevent this raid in some way?"

"I see no way in which we can stop this wholesale slaughter which, undoubtedly, will take place, unless we give notice to the authorities."

"Let us do so, then."

"The government of Tung Chow Foo is despotic, and if we should attempt to notify the viceroy, he would have us locked up, and perhaps tried. The best thing that we can do, is to remain where we are."

"But it seems cruel to allow people to be murdered if we can prevent it."

"We can't prevent it. I would willingly risk my life to save that of others, but under the existing state of affairs, when so much depends on our caution, it would be suicidal for us to attempt anything now which will endanger the lives of Nita and Ella."

On entering the jail-yard, the bogus eye-doctor engaged the jailer in conversation. Before this, three of the bandits had succeeded in gaining admittance to the jail. While Chung Wing stood talking, a cry of murder came from the street, and two of the guards rushed out of the yard to the assistance of a man whom Lum Kee had knocked in the face with his fists.

Lum Kee was arrested and brought into the yard. Chung Wing and the jailer were standing by the gate when they entered. The guards leaving the gate to arrest Lum Kee, left it unguarded, and the minute they had passed into the yard with the prisoner, Chung Wing pulled his sword from his side, cut

the jailer's head off, and bolted the gate securely before any one was aware of what had taken place.

The guards were now attacked by the rest of the bandits, and in a few minutes the jail-yard was the scene of a fearful struggle. The bandits fought like fiends, and slew their assailants like so many cattle. In a few minutes the fight was over, and Chung Wing and his men triumphantly entered the jail, over the bleeding bodies of their victims. Chung Wing went direct to the cell where his man was confined, released him, together with three other prisoners, who were held and awaiting trial for murder. These men joined the bandits, and then they proceeded out into the yard again, where the disguises were thrown off, and the costumes of Quin Lung's bandits were displayed to view. The next building to the jail was the City Court and Treasury, both yards being connected by an iron door. This door Chung Wing had pried open, and then waving his bloody sword over his head, he led his men into the crowded court-room. Those present, when they recognized the bandits, were so terrified that they could not move. Chung Wing marched straight up the center aisle, and faced the judge, who was stricken with fear.

"Have you anything to eat, judge?" asked Chung Wing, with a great deal of insolence. And then, before the trembling magistrate could reply, he spoke in a voice that showed that he would not be trifled with.

"If you have any good wines, have them brought forth, as I am tired and hungry and want some refreshments before I depart. If you don't obey me you shall die."

Chung Wing waved the bloody sword before the judge, and then placed it on the desk. The magistrate then said:

"I will bring you the wines if you allow me to go into the cellar."

"Here, Lum Kee, you go with this fellow," said Chung Wing, as the judge vacated the seat, and he took it, "and see that he brings us good liquor, and that he does not try to put poison in it."

Lum Kee pricked the judge in the hinder parts with his sword, and made the magistrate march at double-quick time out of the court-room.

In a few minutes the judge returned, carrying in each arm a large demijohn of liquor, which he deposited before Chung Wing and said:

"Here is the liquor, but I am sorry to state that we have nothing to eat in the jail."

This made the bandit king furious, and after he had tasted the wine to see if it was good, he said:

"You had better find me some or I will eat you up instead."

The judge fell on his knees; his face was pale, and he was trembling in every limb.

"Spare my life, oh, noble king," he cried in anguish.

"Well, I will," answered Chung Wing; "you can stay in that position until I get through with my meal."

The bandit king now called two of his men to him, and said:

"Go into the next yard and bring me a few of the hearts of the boys that we have just killed."

Lum Kee went with the men, and in a few minutes returned with three human hearts, the blood from which streamed upon the floor and formed a perfect pool. A thrill of horror ran through the audience as they witnessed this spectacle. The court officer whom the bandits had taken with them when he came into the room, was so frightened that the hair of his

head stood on an end. For some minutes he could not talk, and when some one asked him what was the matter, he at last managed to say in a hoarse whisper:

"They are all killed, and those are the hearts of the guards and jailer."

"Take those hearts into the yard and fry them," ordered Chung Wing.

This was done, and when Lum Kee had placed them before the bandit king, Chung Wing said:

"Bring those three women up here and make them wait on me."

The three women, who were in the audience, were now brought forward, and they were so frightened at what they had seen that they could not do anything. Chung Wing noticed their pale faces, and he seemed to delight now in adding more torture to their position.

"If you can't wait upon me," he exclaimed, "you may sit down and have some of the dinner."

The women did not avail themselves of this invitation, but stood transfixed, as it were, to the spot.

The bandits at length sat down to the meal and ate and drank until their hunger was appeased. After the dinner was over and Chung Wing was picking his teeth with the point of his sword, he happened to glance down into the prisoners' pen, and saw a man kneeling in a corner heavily chained.

"What is the matter?" he asked of the man.

"I murdered a man in self-defense, and was being tried for my life when you entered."

"So ho!" exclaimed the bandit king, "this judge was going to sentence you to be killed?" Then turning to the judge, who was still kneeling: "Give me the key for to unlock those chains."

The judge obeyed, and the man was freed from his bonds.

"Now," said the bandit to the prisoner, "you are free, and if you choose to join my army I will be glad to have you."

The man expressed his gratitude to Chung Wing, and then took the oath of allegiance which Lum Kee administered to him.

"Judge, I give you and your assistant fifteen minutes to deliver to me all the money and valuables that are now in the treasury, which you have so diligently saved for us," ordered Chung Wing.

At this command the judge seemed to hesitate. It was only for a few minutes, however, for that minute he saw the bandits draw their swords, and wave them over their heads. He led the way to the vaults where the money was stored.

The men soon returned to the room bearing in their arms 500,000 teals of gold, 110,000 teals of silver, and about 200,000 teals' worth of diamonds and precious stones.

This wealth was packed in bags which were fastened to the horses' backs. When the bandits were preparing to leave, Chung Wing said to the judge:

"Hand over your seal of office." This was done. "I will keep this until you pay me 500,000 teals. I spare your life this time, but if you molest any of my men again, I will surely put you to death. Tell the balance of the city magistrates that they must be careful hereafter how they provoke the wrath of the bandits of Quin Lung."

The bandits now mounted their horses, met Clint and Armand in the woods where they had left them, and then drove off at a furious gait towards the mountains.

On nearing Lai Yon they discovered that the soldiers had

missed their horses, and were now scouring the country high and low for their property.

By accident they ran against a small patrol, the major in command of which quickly recognized the animals, and driving up to Chung Wing, he cried:

"Dismount from those horses. Don't you know that they are the property of his royal highness, the Emperor of Tong Zoon. I arrest you in the name of the emperor."

As the soldiers were about to grasp the horses' heads, Chung Wing waved his sword about his head three times, gave an order to his men, and then dashed into the midst of the soldiers, and cut them down right and left, before they were able to realize what had happened. Losing their leader, the soldiers who were still alive took to their heels, and made for the camp. The robbers were about to pursue the fleeing men, when Chung Wing noticed that about two hundred men were coming out of the camp after them.

In a few minutes the soldiers were within shooting distance, and a shower of arrows was fired over the bandits' heads. Considering that it would be foolishness to stay any longer, Chung Wing and his followers commenced to beat a hasty retreat. They managed to dodge the arrows of their pursuers for some time, when at last three of the horses were shot dead, and their riders were left in the road without any means of escape. Chung Wing immediately ordered a halt, and signaling to his pursuers to desist, the soldiers stopped firing, and approached, thinking that he meant to surrender.

Chung Wing waited until they were within a few yards of him, when he yelled out the war-cry and swept down so suddenly upon the soldiers that a panic was created in their ranks, and notwithstanding the efforts of the leaders they fled for their lives, while the bandits pursued them for some distance like maddened tigers, and killed over fifty of them, including the officers, who fought bravely even to the last.

Chung Wing captured the commander, and was about to behead him when Lum Kee stopped him and suggested that instead of killing the general that they should strip and tie him to a wild horse. The bandit king thought well of this suggestion, and the general was accordingly stripped of his clothes, and then bound with a strong rope to the horse's back. Lum Kee then took some human blood on the end of the stick and wrote upon a piece of white silk, "This is a sample of the brave soldiers of Tong Zoon's army—Chung Wing, King of the Himalayas." He tied this around the general's neck in such a manner that it could not drop off. He next took a quantity of sage, which he tied into a large bunch, and then fastened it to the horse's tail, which they lit, and allowed the animal to start off on his journey.

The emperor was horrified when he heard of the depredations of the bandits, and he immediately issued orders to the great general, Shi Soon, to raise a large army and suppress Chung Wing and his band.

Immediately on Chung Wing's return he set to work to devise a plan to abduct the Viceroy of Nankin, and to hold him a prisoner until a large reward was offered for his return. This undertaking was to be the greatest scheme ever planned by the bandit chief, and he made every precaution against failure.

Chung Wing appointed Lum Kee to disguise himself as the son of the Tido of Lornlin. He was to take an escort of fifteen and visit the viceroy. Chung Wing was to be included in this escort, and was to act as the Tido's son's body-servant.

The bandit king next appointed Wong Hi to disguise him-

self as the famous fortune-teller, Pa Ya, and to set up his gorgeous tent in the center of Nankin for the purpose of telling the fortunes of those high in authority.

Clint and Armand were not let into the secret of this raid, and they did not learn of it until some days afterwards. Chung Wing only took with him his oldest followers, and those whom he could rely on. Clint and Armand were accorded every liberty, and were great favorites with the queen.

CHAPTER IV.

A NIGHT OF HORRORS.

"HAVE you the horses in a safe place?" asked Clint, the evening after they had returned from the raid, as he and Armand sat talking together in their room.

"I have tied them to a tree on the other side of the mountain," rejoined Armand, as he drew his sword across a whetstone. "I have selected four of the fleetest. The girls are both good riders, and, if we start at midnight, by riding all night we will reach Nankin by morning."

"What did Miss Lloyd and Miss West say to the scheme? Are they willing to take the risk?"

"Both of the girls are anxious to leave this place."

"How about the suits?"

"Both Nita and Ella pronounce them perfect fits. I have given each a brace of revolvers, and if we are attacked on the road Nita can use hers as well as I can."

"Have you got the plans drawn yet?"

"Yes; here they are. We will make our way to the main hall, till we reach the last secret door on the right side of the wall. You see this plan of the underground palace," and Armand spread out a plan on which he had spent some hours in drawing. He had taken much pains in making a tour of the whole place, and he considered the diagram as nearly correct as anything could possibly be.

"I can't see how we can go astray," said Clint, after he had examined the diagram carefully. "You have drawn it very accurately, and as far as I can see I don't see as there is any mistake."

"I heard this afternoon that Chung Wing and some of his men are going off this evening before midnight," said Armand, when Clint had folded up the diagram and placed it in his pocket.

"Have you any idea where they are going?"

"No; they are very secret."

"I would like to be able to take Sau ur Neau away with us," mused the detective.

"If we could do it without exposing the girls to any danger, I would be willing to agree to such a plan," exclaimed Armand with enthusiasm, as the brilliancy of the idea struck him with all its force.

"If you will take care of the girls I will manage the queen."

"I'll take care of Ella and Nita; but I want you to understand one thing, Clint, that if any danger comes to you, I will not desert you."

"Thanks, Armand," exclaimed the detective, as he grasped his young companion's hand and squeezed it.

"We dine with her majesty to-night," said Armand; "it is almost the hour and we had better be making preparations."

"What did you do with the chloroform?" asked Clint, as he adjusted his queue.

"Why, what do you want with it?"

"I'll show you after a while. Where is the bottle?"

"Here it is."

Armand handed Clint the bottle of chloroform, wondering what he was going to do with it. Clint placed it carefully in his pocket, together with a sponge and three large silk handkerchiefs. He then cut the silk spread into shreds, and wove the strips into a rope. He placed this also in a pocket inside of his blouse.

Armand watched the detective closely, and then when Clint had finished weaving the rope, he said:

"Are you going to use those on Sau ur Neau?"

"Wait and see," replied Clint, with a twinkle in his eye.

Armand did not question the detective any more, but preferred to wait and see how he would accomplish the difficult job of capturing the woman whom the most noted Chinese generals had failed to entrap.

Rap, rap, rap!

"Who's there?" asked Clint. No one answered, and the detective went to the door and found that no one was in the entry.

"I wonder who that could have been," said Clint, with a puzzled look upon his face, as he closed the door again. He had no sooner done so than—

Rap, rap, rap.

He looked out again, and found no one in sight.

"This is strange!" he mused. He closed the door and waited by it, so that he could throw it open the minute a rap came again.

Rap—

Open went the door, and Clint sprang into the passage. "Help, help!" a female voice cried with anguish. Clint brought the woman into the room. She was almost a skeleton, and as the detective lifted her from the floor, and stopped her from crying, he thought that he heard her bones rattle. Clint closed the door and let go of the woman. For some minutes she stood chattering like a simpleton, and then she burst out into a hideous laugh that made Armand's blood run cold. She had come to the door, had rapped, and then darted back into a niche which concealed her from Clint's sight both times he had looked. On looking at the woman more closely, both Clint and Armand discovered that she was white. Her clothing was nothing but rags, and was out of place among such sumptuous furniture as that in the bedroom. When the woman got over her chattering and laughing, a look of intelligence seemed to overcast her face. Then she seemed to know that she was in the company of two Chinamen (as she supposed). When she saw Clint she straightened up to her full height and exclaimed:

"Fiend, carry me back to my husband!"

"My good woman," said Clint, in a kindly tone of voice, "I would willingly do what you suggest, but I don't know what your name is, or who you are."

The minute the woman heard her own language spoken she burst into tears. Her hair was gray, and it fell in straggling locks down her back. Her face was haggard, and showed that she had suffered terribly, but, for all this, Armand and Clint could see that at one time her beauty was something more than ordinary. Again she went off into her chattering mood, and commenced to shriek. This exertion was too much for her weak system, and she fainted. Clint pulled a bottle of brandy from his pocket, and poured some of the contents down her throat. This seemed to revive her, and when she came to she was sensible again.

"My good woman, can you tell me your name?" asked Clint, as he held the thin frame up.

"My name? I haven't spoken it in years. Let me see—what is it?"

She stopped, and then it seemed as if she were going to faint again. Clint gave her some more of the liquor, and this seemed to give her new strength. After a few moments she placed her hand to her head, and exclaimed:

"I have suffered fearfully for years; my senses have almost left me, and now that some of my reason has returned I feel as if I am going to die."

Again Clint gave her more of the liquor, and she continued:

"You asked me what my name was. Yes, if I tell it to you you will not believe me."

"Yes, I will," answered Clint, re-assuringly.

"Are you a Chinaman? No, you can't be, and talk English so fluently."

"Never mind, tell me who you are, and you may rest assured that I will help you all I can."

"My name is Celia De Witt."

At this Armand started, and then exclaimed, as he rushed to the woman's side:

"Can it be—my mother?"

The woman had fainted again, and it seemed this time as if she were dead. More liquor was administered, and at last the detective and Armand had the satisfaction of seeing her open her eyes. When she had gained a little strength, she went on with her narrative.

"My name, as I told you, is Celia De Witt; my husband is a wealthy banker at Canton. His name is Armand De Witt."

At this Armand clasped his arms around the ragged form, and kissed the pale and bloodless lips.

"My mother; oh, that I should see you in such a plight."

Tears came to the young man's eyes, and he cried bitterly. Clint was overcome with emotion also, and could not speak as he looked at the picture of mother and son.

"You call me mother?" exclaimed the woman. "Your name; let me know your name?"

"Armand De Witt."

"Is it possible! My son; the child from whom I was so cruelly carried away. In this costume, and among these men."

"Yes, mother."

"That name is sweet to my ears, my boy, after so much suffering," said Mrs. De Witt, kissing her son and pressing his head to her bosom.

"I was always told that you had been murdered, mother," said Armand. "Oh, that I had known of this before."

"How is your father?"

"Dead years ago."

"My God!"

Mrs. De Witt fell back in her son's arms, clutched several times at her breast, as if she were in deep agony, and then with a deep groan, a gasp for breath, and the name of her husband upon her lips, she slowly passed away. The detective and Armand did everything in their power to revive her, but at last they saw that she was dead, and had passed to a world beyond, where her sufferings would be at an end, and she would meet her husband, who was murdered by the bandits when she was carried off.

The two men were silent for some time, each contemplating the form before them, and musing about what had been revealed to them so suddenly. At last Armand exclaimed:

"May all the curses from heaven be visited on those fiends

for the work that they have done. I swear that I will never rest until I see all of these devils brought to justice, and punished for the wrongs that they have committed against me."

Clint clasped Armand's hand when he stopped speaking, and said, with a voice that was full of emotion:

"Armand, the oath that you have just taken, I take, also, and I swear that, no matter what may come, I will stand by you and help you to avenge your parents' death."

"Clint, I am very grateful to you for this kind offer. I accept it. But why should you endanger your life in such a cause as mine?"

"For justice, and to help a countryman."

It was now quite late in the afternoon. Both men stood gazing at the body of Mrs. De Witt, and then Armand said:

"Clint, what shall we do with the body?"

"Notify the queen, and have it buried."

"I would like to give it a Christian burial."

"That will be impossible now. We can bury your mother temporarily, and when we have captured the fiends, then we can remove the body to Canton."

Mrs. De Witt had been captured years before by the bandits and confined in a cell in the underground palace. She had become a maniac and a walking skeleton by ill-use and being poorly fed. She was harmless, though, and was allowed to run around loose during certain hours of the day. This was the first time that either Clint or Armand had seen her, and the occasion was a sorrowful one to each. Mrs. De Witt was called "The Phantom" by Sau ur Neau's household, and she was greatly feared by the women, who at times would meet her in some one of the galleries and think that she was a ghost.

Clint and Armand were about to go to the audience-chamber to see the queen, when they were interrupted in their conversation by a rap at the door. Clint opened the door and Sau ur Neau entered the room.

"Gentlemen, I have been waiting for you to come to dinner. I got tired, and I thought that I would come myself and see what detained you. No one will be present except ourselves, and we will have a good time. Hello! what is this?"

This last exclamation was uttered as the queen's eyes fell on the bed, and she beheld the cold and stiff body of Mrs. De Witt.

"What is the dog doing here?"

Armand could hardly refrain from jumping upon the queen, when he heard her use this phrase. Clint held his friend back and then answered in a quiet tone:

"She is dead."

"How came she to die?"

Clint explained to Sau ur Neau how she had entered the room, but left out the account of the meeting between mother and son. When he had finished speaking, the queen said:

"We will have her body thrown out for food for the wolves."

"Better bury it," broke in Clint, as a shiver ran through his body, when he thought of the woman's cruelty.

"Why should we bury it?" asked Sau ur Neau with a sneer.

"I ask it as a favor of your majesty," said Clint, "that you have these remains inclosed in a coffin, and have them buried on the mountain-side."

"Well, I will do so," answered the queen, after some moments, during which she was wrapped in deep thought. She then called some of her attendants, and in about fifteen minutes all that remained of Mrs. De Witt was placed in a rude pine box. The

men lifted the box on their shoulders, and slowly followed by the detective, Armand and the queen, they conveyed it to the side of the mountain, where they dug a grave and buried it. The grave was at the foot of a large hemlock. While the queen was not looking, Armand marked the tree with a cross, by cutting away the bark in such a manner that the mark would remain for years if not disturbed. After burying Mrs. De Witt, the queen and her grand chancellors returned to the palace, where they sat down to a bounteous feast. Besides Armand, Clint, and two attendants, no one else was in the room. The two friends ate their dinner, and did their utmost to try and keep up a lively conversation, but they found it hard work. When dinner was over, the queen had the dishes cleared away, and then ordered wine to be brought on. When this was done Sau ur Neau dismissed the attendants, and the two friends were now alone with the woman they intended to capture. Notwithstanding the fact that they were two to one, they saw that they would have to be cautious, lest they should arouse the queen's suspicions, and then she would escape from them.

Sau ur Neau poured out three large gold goblets of wine, handed one to each of her guests, and kept the third for herself. After she had done this, she said:

"Here's to the health of Chung Wing, and may he succeed in the expedition."

The friends appeared to drink the toast, but they only sipped the wine. Sau ur Neau drained her goblet, poured out some more wine, filled it, and then drank the second time.

"Drink and be merry," said the queen, "for Chung Wing will bring back a fortune greater than that possessed by any of the kings of the world."

"Where has his majesty gone?" asked Clint, when he saw that the queen was becoming quite talkative under the influence of the wine.

"Gone to Nankin to abduct the viceroy. Here's to his health."

The queen drank a goblet-full again, while Clint and Armand only took a sip of the wine.

By this time Sau ur Neau was almost intoxicated, and Clint had hopes that she would drink so much that he would not be compelled to chloroform her.

At this point the great bell in the hall tolled the midnight hour. Sau ur Neau attempted to rise from the table, but found her legs so unsteady that she could not do so. She was about to summon her attendants, when Clint said:

"If your majesty will permit us we will see you safely to your bed-chamber."

"I'll accept your offer," said the queen.

The two friends took hold of each arm, and assisted her from the chair. Unnoticed Clint had taken the sponge from his pocket and saturated it with the drug. He held it in his left hand.

The queen had hardly taken ten steps toward the door, when, with the rapidity of a flash of lightning, the detective slapped the sponge over Sau ur Neau's nose and mouth. Armand was as quick as his companion, and pinioned the woman's arms behind her back in such a manner that she could offer hardly any resistance.

They had taken the queen so by surprise that in a few minutes she lay unconscious upon the floor. Clint now put a gag over her mouth, and tied her feet and hands so that she could not offer any resistance when she came to.

"Away, Armand, and bring the girls hither, and we will

be off," exclaimed Clint, when he was through tying the queen. "Look well when you go out of the room, and make sure that no one is in sight."

"All right," returned Armand, as he left the dining-hall.

In a few minutes he returned and said:

"The coast is clear and we have nothing to fear. The girls are in the main hall waiting for us at the secret door. I will now help you carry the queen."

Armand took hold of Sau ur Neau's feet, while Clint took hold of her arms. They lifted her up and then carried her out of the room, through the audience chamber, and thence into the main hall, where they joined Nita and Ella.

Clint found very little trouble in opening the secret door, and then they entered the passage which led to the wing entrance. After Clint had closed the door he lit his dark-lantern and handed it to Nita, who carried it in the rear of the party. The brave girl showed not the least signs of fear, and was fully conscious of the importance of the part which she was to act. For some distance the party proceeded in silence. The unconscious Queen proved a heavy burden for Armand and Clint to carry, but then they were so excited over the capture that they did not mind the weight. The passage was cold and damp, and at certain places they were compelled to wade through pools of water ankle-deep. Here and there on the walls small streams of water trickled down over the rocks, and as the light fell upon them, the adventurers could see snails and lizards dart in and out of holes. On, on, they went, without anything occurring to impede their progress, when suddenly Armand, who was leading, came to a full stop. An iron door stood before them. Armand examined this and turning to Clint, said:

"I don't understand this. This door was not here the other day. The door to the entrance of the passage is made of wood; this is of iron."

"Perhaps they have changed the door," returned Clint.

"We may have got off into some side passage," suggested Nita.

"I don't know of any side passage," said Armand. "I thought that I had examined the place pretty carefully. I didn't see any passage but the main one the other day. I think we are all right."

"Then let us go ahead and lose no more time," said Clint.

Armand now examined the door, and found that it opened much in the same manner as the one leading from the main hall. He touched a spring, and the door flew open. He led the way forward, and they entered another passage. Nita was holding the door open, but somehow she let go her hold, and it flew to with a bang.

"What have I done?" she cried, as she realized that she had locked the party in.

"Never mind," said Clint; "we will go forward and see if there is not another opening."

They now proceeded along a narrower passage than the first, until their progress was again impeded by an iron door, much smaller than the one through which they had entered. Armand opened this as he had done the others, and the party entered a large vault-like chamber. Nita seemed to be especially unfortunate this night, for as she tried to hold the door open her foot slipped, she fell to the floor, and the door went to and locked with a click that awoke the death-like silence of the place.

"Oh, horror! what is this?" exclaimed Nita, as she looked at her hand, which was covered with a slimy substance.

She turned the rays of the light full upon the floor, and then she started to her feet, her face as pale as death. She grasped Armand's arm, and in a hoarse whisper exclaimed:

"Look at the floor, Armand; it is completely covered with *decomposed human flesh*."

"My God! we are in the *Chamber of Horrors*," cried Armand, as he looked at the floor, and felt his feet slip every time he took a step.

"We are in this charnal-house," said Clint, coolly, as he looked around, "and now we will have to devise some means of getting out."

"I tell you *Sau ur Neau* is heavy," said Armand. "My arms are giving out, and if we don't get out of here pretty soon I will be compelled to let her drop on this floor."

"Can't Nita and I hold her for a short time?" asked Ella, who had acted quite bravely all during the trying circumstances of the evening. Now that she was in this terrible dungeon, her nerves were strong, and her voice showed not the least sign of a tremor.

"I don't think that you and Nita are strong enough," said Clint, "but if you think that you could hold the woman for a few minutes you will be rendering us a great service, as it will give Armand and me a chance to look around and see if we can't find some means of escape."

"I think that we can do it," said Nita, who fully coincided with what her cousin had suggested.

"You can try it," said Clint, "and if she is too heavy for you, you can just say so, and we will come to your aid."

The girls then took the places of the men, and Clint took the lantern from Nita.

As the detective looked around the dungeon he saw, heaped up in little hillets, masses of bones and dust, and here and there he came across the whole skeletons of men, some lying on their backs, others on bended knees, with their hands clasped and raised up before their faces, while still others were leaning up against the walls, just as they had died of starvation after they had been thrown into this fearful place, the terrors of which were enough to make one die of fright instead of hunger.

Clint and Armand took opposite sides, and commenced to sound the walls with the handles of their swords to see if they could find a hollow place. All their efforts proved of no avail, and they arrived at the end of the dungeon only to report to one another that the walls which they had sounded were solid.

"If we don't find some means of escape," whispered Clint in Armand's ear, "we will smother to death from the gases that arise from these decomposed bodies."

"Let us try this end wall," said Armand; "I have an idea that there must be another door besides the one by which we entered."

"You commence at your end and work towards the center," said Clint.

The men went at their work again. Suddenly Armand's sword hit against a kind of elastic surface, which made it spring almost out of his grasp. Then there was a rumbling sound, and a minute afterwards the wall gave way, and a gust of pure air rushed into their faces.

"Hurrah!" cried Armand, "we have found an outlet, and it will not be many minutes before we will be out of this accursed hole."

Clint and Armand now relieved the girls of their burden, and then led the way into the passage that they had so luckily

discovered. In a few minutes they came to a small opening just large enough for a man to crawl through on his hands and knees. The detective and Armand deposited the queen on the ground, and then Clint crawled through the hole to reconnoiter. The detective found that the hole was hid from sight by a thick growth of sage-bushes, and that it was situated within a few yards of the *Smo River*, a small stream, the source of which was in a lake at the top of the mountains.

Clint helped Nita and Ella through the hole, and then he and Armand got *Sau ur Neau* through.

Armand now went to look for the horses. He found them still grazing where he had left them, and in a short time he returned to his companions, who were not long in mounting the animals, and then they drove quickly away. The girls were both fine horsewomen, and Armand found that they would have no difficulty in managing their animals.

Clint carried the limp body of the queen across his lap. He administered to her another dose of chloroform, so that she could not possibly return to consciousness and give them any trouble. Very little occurred during the journey to Nankin to interrupt their progress, and they arrived safely in the city before any one was astir. After considerable trouble Clint succeeded in hiring a vacant house—in one of the rooms of which he locked the bandit queen. The detective did not desire to make the capture known, until he had first seen the emperor, and learned what his feelings were in regard to the bandits. He did not wish to run any risks, when he had such wily foes to deal with, and this was the reason he was so cautious in his actions.

CHAPTER V.

THE CAPTURE OF THE VICEROY.

A CROWD of men and women, principally working people, were gathered around a large tent in a vacant lot in the center of Nankin. The tent was made of heavy silk cloth, and from each one of the poles there waved a silken banner on which was engraven some mystic symbol. Over the main entrance was placed a sign, on which was painted, in large red letters:

THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE
REVEALED.

NONE BUT DISTINGUISHED MEN AND
WOMEN CAN ENTER.

The crowd read and re-read the sign, and wondered what the mysteries were that the tent contained, from which they were excluded on account of their being poor. To them it seemed as if their poverty was a crime, and some murmured at the unjust decree of the famous fortune-teller, and yearned to enter the place. All classes of Chinese are very superstitious, and the fortune-tellers reap a rich harvest by practicing on the credulity of their clients.

Upon the morning of the day that the bogus *Pa Ya* set up his tent, the bogus *Tido's* son entered the city with his retinue, and went immediately to the house of the viceroy. At that moment the great statesman was greatly exorcised and in deep trouble over the loss of his seal of office. There was a law in China which punished the guilty party by death

if he lost his seal of office. While the viceroy was engaged in looking for his seal, a servant entered the room, and said:

"The Prince of Namlin, John Pin, desires to see you."

The viceroy, who was glad to see any one except an emissary from the emperor, ordered the servant to show the visitor into the audience chamber.

John Pin entered, and after the customary ceremonies of greeting, he and Chung Wing sat down in seats on each side of the viceroy. After talking about various subjects, John Pin said:

"I have been sightseeing in Hau Chow and Soo Chow. In the latter city I lost a very valuable slave. I was told there that the famous Pa Ya, the fortune-teller, was to be here, and so I came hither to consult him about my loss."

"Is he able to tell you what has become of the slave?" queried the viceroy, in an excited tone of voice.

"I have never known him to fail. He is a wonderful man, and the minute he sees you he can tell exactly what you have come to consult him on. I have been to consult him several times, and what he has told me has invariably come true."

"When are you going to see this noted and fortunate man?" the viceroy asked, with a great deal of concern. "He is now in the city; I heard one of my guards talking about him this morning."

"If that is so," said the bogus John Pin, "I guess I will go and see him immediately." At this he arose, as if he intended to depart right on the spur of the moment.

"If you will wait a moment, until I put on a civilian's dress, I will go with you."

"I shall be pleased to have your company."

The viceroy retired, and soon returned so completely disguised that no one would recognize him as the great Chin Kurin, the man who controlled the policy of the imperial party.

In a short time they were in the fortune-teller's tent, and stood before an old man, who was sitting at a table reading a book, which was full of mystic signs and characters. Before him on the table was a large glass globe, a chart, a number of curiously-shaped brass instruments, a skull and a quantity of human bones. The tent was darkened, and on each side of the fortune-teller was placed a candlestick-like lamp, from the center of which a blue flame came out in fits and starts. The walls were covered with black silk, and this was ornamented with white figures of snakes, lizards, gods and goddesses. Between each figure there were a number of stars, which were arranged so as to form a circle.

As the viceroy and John Pin entered accompanied by Chung Wing, the old fortune-teller straightened up, adjusted his spectacles, and looked straight at the bogus Tido's son and said:

"Your slave will never return. He has committed suicide by throwing himself into a well."

He said no more to John Pin, but as his gaze fell on the viceroy, he arose from his seat with a look of surprise upon his face. He started forward and exclaimed:

"My lord, you are either the *Son of Heaven* (Emperor) or some other great man."

The viceroy started, and then in a hurried whisper he said in Pa Ya's ear:

"Don't mention my name." His voice was trembling, and he continued with his face full of fear: "I have come to ask your assistance in a private matter, and if you will aid me I will pay you any sum that you may ask."

"Let me see," exclaimed the fortune-teller, as he passed

both of his hands over the viceroy's head, and made various motions with his fingers, as if he were feeling the great man's bumps. Suddenly he stopped and looked full into the viceroy's face, and then hissed between his teeth:

"It's a terrible mishap—terrible, terrible, terrible."

The fortune-teller covered his face with his hands. At this moment one of the lamps went out, and the other only burned with a small flame. As the viceroy now looked at the table where the skull was lying, he started and groaned aloud. It seemed to him that as the fortune-teller uttered the last words, two flames of fire shot from the eyes of the skull and the mouth opened wide. To him the action of the skull seemed to forebode evil, and he remained for some time silently gazing at the object, and acting as if he had been stricken dumb.

"How can I arrange this matter?" muttered the fortune-teller, as he took a seat at the table, and commenced to figure on the forehead of the skull, which was so arranged that it could be used as a slate.

For some time he figured in silence, and then, as he added column after column of figures to those that he had already written, he exclaimed as he stopped adding up the sums:

"Great heavens! Great heavens!"

"If you can arrange this," said the viceroy, in a voice full of anguish, "I will be willing to pay any amount, no matter how great it may be."

"It will be very difficult to get it back," said the fortune-teller; "but I think that I can arrange everything satisfactorily. If you meet me to-morrow night, at midnight, at the Bridge of the Sages, and bring 200,000 teals with you, I think that we will not return disappointed. It will be well for you to come alone, or if you don't want to do this, you can bring a friend and one or two servants."

Before leaving the fortune-teller, the governor laid on the table two hundred teals, and then he and John Pin took their departure. The viceroy invited the false Tido's son to stay at his palace, and then go with him the next evening to meet the noted Pa Ya at the Bridge of the Sages. The next day he told John Pin of his great loss, and begged of him not to say a word about it to a living soul. The false Tido's son now said, after the viceroy had told him about the loss of his seal:

"Why not take a large body of men with us and capture the thieves? Then you would save your 200,000 teals."

"This would never do," said the viceroy. "The thieves would become frightened and not show up, and then the whole matter of my loss would be made known, and I would be compelled to suffer."

"Do you suppose that they would mind four or five men?"

"No, but any more would be likely to make them suspicious."

"Well, then, my guard will be just enough."

"Yes."

The viceroy went and disguised himself, and after they had weighed out the gold and put it in large sacks, which they placed upon the backs of four large army horses, the party started out for the place where they were to find the fortune-teller waiting for them.

When the viceroy and the party arrived at the bridge they met the false fortune-teller, who engaged the statesman in conversation for a few minutes, and then he started forward and exclaimed:

"To work, my men; tie your prisoner!"

Before the viceroy could do anything his arms were tied

tightly behind his back, and then Chung Wing exclaimed, as he cut off the heads of the statesman's two slaves:

"Behold before you the great Chung Wing, the King of the Himalayas!"

Instantly it flashed upon the viceroy that he had been duped.

He was so securely tied that he found that even if he had had a chance it would be impossible for him to escape.

Chung Wing mounted a swift horse, threw the captive across the saddle, and then, followed by his adherents, who looked after the gold, they drove off in the direction of their palace, intending when they arrived to hold the viceroy a captive until a heavy ransom was paid them for his safe return.

When they arrived within a few miles of their stronghold it was bright daylight, and as Chung Wing looked down into the valley he beheld a sight that made him start with surprise.

In front of the House of Refreshments there was gathered a large body of soldiers, and the bandit king saw that a fierce struggle was going on between them and his men.

As Chung Wing drew nearer, he saw that his men were being worsted, and that unless something was speedily done his stronghold would be captured.

He looked at the struggling parties closely, but he failed to see any signs of his wife. He started as the thought came to him that perhaps she might have been killed, and then, with a curse, he cried to his men:

"Follow me, and don't let a man of you give any quarter to the dogs."

The men answered their leader by giving the famous war-cry, which their companions heard, and which seemed to make them rally and fight with the fury of demons.

The Imperial army was now attacked in its rear. This threw the forces into a panic, and the men stopped fighting, and tried to escape from the fiends, who were cutting them down on all sides, and slaughtering them like so many cattle. Chung Wing gained the place where the rest of his band were gathered, and then after he had consolidated his forces he led them after the fleeing Imperialists. Chung Wing captured the commander, Ye Sii, and then cut his head off. After he did this he ordered his men to stop. They halted under a large hemlock, and then the bandit king cut the limbs off of the commander, stuck his head on one of the limbs of the tree, and tied the rest of the body under it. When this was finished he wrote on a piece of the man's shirt with the blood of one of his victim:

"This was done by Chung Wing."

He tied this around the neck of the commander, and then the party returned to their stronghold. Great was Chung Wing's surprise when he discovered that Sau ur Neau was no place to be found; and that the new grand chancellors had disappeared also, together with the white girl captives. After he found this out, it suddenly dawned upon him that perhaps his wife had been made a prisoner and carried off. He immediately summoned his followers in the great main hall, and then stated to them all that he had discovered, and said:

"Sau ur Neau is held a captive some place, and I intend to appoint fifty scouts, whom I desire to scour the country high and low and try to find out where she is. To the man who discovers the queen's place of confinement I will give a captain's commission and a large reward. We will hold the viceroy a prisoner, and upon Sau ur Neau's safe return depends the life of the emperor's favorite statesman."

The king now appointed the scouts, and after giving them some orders, the men started off on their mission, each deter-

mined not to leave a stone unturned until they discovered their mistress' whereabouts.

When the famous general, Woo Soon, heard of the failure of the expedition against the bandits of Quin Lung, and of the great loss which his men had sustained, he was furious with rage, and he gave immediate orders for the equipment of two thousand men, whom he intended to assume the command of, and then start out towards the mountains with the full determination of not returning until he had rid the kingdom of the fiends who had held the people in such abject terror for years.

The day after the general had started out on his expedition, the emperor received notice that his favorite minister was held a prisoner by the bandits, and also that if he had Sau ur Neau a prisoner he was to give her up, or the viceroy would be put to death. Clint had not been able to obtain an audience with the emperor as yet, and after he heard of the viceroy's abduction, and Chung Wing's proclamation, he and Armand concluded that the best thing that they could do, would be not to make known Sau ur Neau's capture until after they found out what the bandits would do if they found that the emperor did not have the queen in any of his prisons as a captive.

After the emperor heard of the viceroy's capture, he became frightened, and called his ministers together to consult about the course they should pursue in the matter. After a great deal of consultation they finally came to the conclusion that the best thing they could do would be to allow the bandits to make their own terms, and to allow Chung Wing to search all the prisons, and make sure that the emperor did not have Sau ur Neau confined in any of them. Accordingly, a proclamation was written to this effect, and then sent to Chung Wing. The bandit king waited for a few days before he replied to the emperor's proclamation, and till after he had searched the prisons, and made sure that Sau ur Neau was not confined in any of them. Then he sent word to the emperor that he would return the viceroy in safety providing that he was given the exclusive right of the Quin Lung mountains, covering an area of 700 square miles, and was paid 5,000,000 teals, and three hundred horses. The demand was conceded to without a murmur, and negotiations were immediately set on foot for the exchange of the captive and the money.

The viceroy was returned in safety, and was welcomed with joy by the emperor. When questioned about the place where he had been confined, he could not give any information as to where it was situated, on account of his having been blindfolded when he was taken in and out of the underground palace. He told his constituents and the emperor of the wonderful sights that he had seen, and of the great wealth which the underground palace contained. They were astonished, and after the emperor had heard his prime minister's story, notwithstanding his fear of Chung Wing, he commenced to think of some plan whereby he could capture these bandits and become possessor of all this immense wealth. Up to this time he was not aware of the new expedition that General Soon had planned and set out at the head of. The general now surrounded the mountain, and was almost confident that this time he would be successful. He was not fully acquainted with the characters of the bandits, or he never would have thought as he did. Day after day, as he waited to see if Chung Wing or any of his men would show themselves, reports came to his ears, through his scouts, of the most terrible massacres being committed in different parts of the surround-

ing country. He could not understand how it was that the bandits could make their way to and from their cave without him knowing of it, as his army guarded every approach to the mountains. Chung Wing and his men now went in and out of the entrance near the village, and every day passed within four hundred yards of where the general and his forces were stationed.

Finally, news came to Chung Wing that two of the scouts that he had sent out to search for Sau ur Neau had been captured for committing a murder at Che Foo, and had been taken to Nankin. This action the bandit king considered as the work of the emperor, whom he thought had broken his promise. The emperor, when he heard of the incarceration of the two bandits, went before his Board of Punishment, which was the same as a Grand Jury, and advised the members to put the robbers in jail instead of putting them to death, as he was afraid of provoking the robbers any more, lest they should become more cruel and carry on their raids with more fury. Some of the members of the board agreed with the emperor, but the majority of them thought that the best thing that could be done, would be to execute the robbers, and not show them any more mercy than the victims whom they had slaughtered.

"I would advise," said the president of the board, Kwi Kong by name, "that we execute every one of these fiends that we capture; then in the end we will have the satisfaction of seeing them all brought to justice."

"Do as you think best," said the emperor, "and if any evil follows I will not be responsible for it."

Kwi Kong then had the bandits beheaded and their heads displayed in the public market-place, as a warning to any of their associates.

When Chung Wing heard of Kwi Kong's action, he immediately summoned together thirty of his men and started out for Nankin, which he reached at midnight on the day of the execution. He had with him a picked body of men, among whom were ten experienced athletes who were proficient in the art of scaling high walls.

Chung Wing went immediately to the house where Kwi Kong resided, and which adjoined the emperor's palace. Chung Wing learned that the emperor was not to blame, and he determined to be revenged on the president of the Board of Punishment.

Kwi Kong's house was surrounded by a high wall, and was well guarded by a large body of soldiers who were stationed in the court-yard. This made it almost impossible for any stranger to enter the minister's house without being seen. This fact did not baffle Chung Wing, however, and he and his men soon mounted the rear wall, the top of which was within a few feet of the roof of the house. Waiting until the guards were busily engaged in conversation, the bandits then jumped upon the roof, and in a few minutes had a hole cut through into the apartment below, without attracting the attention of its inmates.

On looking through the hole which they had cut in the roof, Chung Wing discovered that two young women were sitting in the room by the window engaged in playing on musical instruments. The apartment was brilliantly lighted, and the bandit king saw that it was connected with another large room, the door of which was standing wide open. Not waiting any longer, for fear that the woman would discover the opening and give an alarm, Chung Wing gave a few hasty orders to his followers, and then jumped into the center of the room, fol-

lowed by three of his men. The bandit did not wait for the women to recover from their surprise, but he pounced upon them instantly, and, with one stroke of his sword, severed both of their heads from their bodies. He then walked into the next apartment and discovered that it belonged to Kwi Kong, and that the minister and two of his wives were quietly sleeping in the bed.

Unconscious of danger, they slept on. Chung Wing saw that the sleepers were sleeping on their backs, and that their necks were in an even row. He stepped with a cat-like tread up to the side of the bed, grasped the handle of his sword with both hands, raised the weapon over his head, and then let it come down upon the throats of the sleepers with terrible force. The women's heads rolled over on the pillow, but Kwi Kong's still remained on his body; he being near to the bandit, the sword did not come down with as much force as it did on his wives' necks. The throat of the minister was cut slightly, but not enough to kill him. Chung Wing noticed this, as the man raised up in the bed, and then he stabbed him through the heart, and finished his bloody work. The deed had been done so quickly that no one in the house was disturbed.

Chung Wing and his men now plundered the rooms, and packed the valuables in a bag. When they had finished plundering, Chung Wing had the minister taken from the bed, the blood washed from him, and then dressed in his state robes. They then lifted the body to the roof, and, by the aid of a rope, lowered it to those in waiting on the wall, and thence into the emperor's private garden in the back of the palace.

The windows of the Imperial chambers faced the private garden, and were on the ground floor. No one was allowed to enter the private garden except the members of the family, and to the person who dared to encroach upon the sacred grounds the penalty was instant death. Chung Wing and one of his men carried the minister's body to within a few feet of the emperor's window. The curtains were drawn down, and a dim light was burning in the window. The bandit king now placed the body of Kwi Kong upon the knees, and then in a position as if the minister were kneeling with his head bowed and his hands clasped before him. Chung Wing now placed a card around the minister's neck, on which was written:

"So perish all dogs that take the life of the brotherhood!"

CHUNG WING,

King of Quin Lung."

The bandits now took their departure, and arrived at their stronghold when the gray dawn of morning was just breaking over the top of the mountains.

They saw the Imperial army still in the valley, but were not seen either by General Soon or his hosts. Everything was as quiet as the grave, and only the measured tread of the sentries could be heard as they paced up and down their posts, little thinking that Chung Wing and his band had that night committed a crime that would startle the whole nation on the morrow. What next would the bandits do, if something was not done to check their mad career of bloodshed, incest, and robbery?

CHAPTER VI.

CLINT VISITS THE EMPEROR.

WHEN the emperor arose in the morning and looked out into his private garden, he was astonished to see a man kneeling before his window, and still greater was his astonishment, when he discovered that this man was Kwi Kong. He could

not imagine why the minister should be kneeling in such a position, and in such a place. He supposed that it must have been very important business that would bring the man into his private garden. He dressed hastily and went out to see what was the matter. He approached the body from behind, laid his hand on his shoulder, and said:

"Rise, my lord, and inform me why you are kneeling here at this hour."

Not receiving any reply, he shook him, and then the head fell to the side, displaying where the neck had been cut.

"Great heavens!" cried the emperor, in alarm, "who could have done this?"

At this the card attracted his attention. He took it in his hands, and with his eyes fairly starting from his head, he read what Chung Wing had written. With a cry of horror, and his teeth chattering with fear, the emperor ran back into the palace and aroused the whole household, which came trooping into the yard, and beheld the terrible sight of the murdered body of the President of the Board of Punishment. Still greater was their horror when they carried the body into the minister's house, and beheld the other victims in the sleeping-room. The minute the emperor returned to his palace, he caused to be issued a proclamation, recalling General Soon, whom he had heard the night before was surrounding the bandit's stronghold.

When Clint and Armand heard of the assassination that morning they and the girls were eating their breakfast in a room adjoining that in which the queen was confined. Sau ur Neau had returned to consciousness, and when she was informed that she was a prisoner she became furious, and swore that when she got free she would revenge herself upon those who had brought her away from the underground palace as a prisoner. So frantic was she in her actions that they were compelled to keep her heavily laden with chains which Clint had brought the morning after their arrival.

Nita was just pouring out some tea when a servant entered the room, out of breath, and exclaimed:

"Kwi Kong, one of the emperor's prime ministers, and his two wives were murdered last night by the Great Chung Wing."

"What's that?" queried Nita, in great surprise.

"This thing has got to stop," said Clint, in a voice that was full of decision, "and this fiend must be brought to justice. I will see the emperor to-day and offer him my services."

"Suppose he declines them?" said Armand.

"Then I will undertake the capture myself, without his aid. It is a downright shame that such a scoundrel and human hyena should be allowed to run loose at will."

The detective swallowed a cup of coffee, put on his hat, and was about to leave the room when Armand said:

"I'll go with you, Clint. It will be perfectly safe to leave the girls alone for a short time."

"Come on, then," said Clint. The two friends then left the house and proceeded direct to the palace, where they were ushered into the audience chamber to await the emperor's arrival. Neither the girls nor the men had changed their costumes, and if one had not known it, one could not tell but what they were Chinese.

For some time, Clint and Armand waited, and when they found that the emperor was late in arriving, Clint grew impatient, and stepping up to one of the noblemen present, he said:

"Will you tell his majesty that two of his subjects desire to

see him in private, for a few minutes, on business of vital importance."

The occurrences of that morning had made every one of the imperial household suspicious. The nobleman eyed Clint closely, and then said:

"If you have any business with the emperor you can wait until he arrives."

"If you don't tell his majesty what I ask you, I will seek him out without your permission."

The detective said this in such a tone of determination that the nobleman became frightened, and thinking that there might be a row, in which he did not care about participating, he said:

"If you will wait here a few minutes I will give the emperor your message."

The nobleman went off, and in a very short time returned, saying that the emperor would be pleased to receive them in his private room, and that if they would follow him he would show them the way.

They were ushered into a room where they found the emperor sitting at a table and busily engaged in writing. When they entered the apartment Jow Zoon arose from his chair, and after motioning for his attendants to withdraw, he said:

"You say that you want to see me on business of vital importance; please state what it is."

Clint then said:

"Your majesty has been annoyed for a number of years by Chung Wing and his bandits, and of late their inhuman deeds have become so frequent that something ought to be done to bring them to justice. I am an American detective, and my friend here is also an American, and has been a resident of China for a number of years. We have been among the bandits for some weeks, and are fully acquainted with their abode. If you will give us a commission and a body of men well equipped we will guarantee to capture both Chung Wing and Sau ur Neau, as well as the rest of the fiends."

"I have sent expedition after expedition against these robbers, but every one of them has proved unsuccessful. I can't see how you will be able to accomplish anything."

"If your majesty will give us the support that we ask for we will guarantee to do whatever we promise."

For some time the emperor was lost in thought, and then he said:

"I will think over your proposition, and let you know to-morrow. Here is a passport, which you can show in the audience chamber to-morrow morning, and you will be allowed to come to this room without any trouble."

Clint took the passport, which was made of a narrow slip of yellow paper, with a number of Chinese characters on its surface and placed it carefully in his pocket.

The detective and Armand now left the palace, and went towards the place where they had been stopping. They arrived at the house, and were surprised to find the front door standing wide open.

Armand rushed up the stairs to the room where they had left the girls, and when he entered the apartment he cried out in surprise, as he saw the condition in which the room was:

"Clint! Clint! come here quick. There has been a struggle in the room, and the girls have disappeared."

He did not wait for the detective to come up, but he hurried to the room where Sau ur Neau had been confined. He drew open the door, and saw the chains lying in a heap in the

center of the floor. Clint was now by his side, and the minute the detective realized what had occurred he exclaimed:

"Quick, Armand! The girls are again in the hands of the bandits. Sau ur Neau has escaped, and if we do not act quickly I am afraid that we will be too late to be of any service. This time the queen will not hesitate to do anything that is cruel."

"Why didn't I stay?" said Armand, with his voice full of anguish, and his face showing the agony that he was suffering.

"There is no use of crying over spilt milk, and the sooner we get started the better it will be."

Without waiting any longer, the two friends buckled on their swords, strapped on their pistol belts, went and got their horses, mounted and rode off in the direction in which they thought the abductors of the girls had gone.

At the gate of the city, they were told that three men and three women had driven past about an hour before, and from the description given, they supposed that it must have been the two girls—the queen and some one of the Quin Lung brigands.

While Clint and Armand are pursuing the abductors, let us return to the time when they left the house to go to the emperor's palace.

Armand and Clint had hardly left the house fifteen minutes, when there came a knock at the door, and Nita went to answer it, as they had just dismissed their house-servant, and the girls were in the house alone with the prisoner.

Nita had barely opened the door when she was grasped and gagged by a stalwart Chinaman before she was able to cry out for help or offer any resistance. She immediately recognized the fellow as Lum Kee, Chung Wing's lieutenant.

Lum Kee had been passing along the street that morning, when he recognized Clint and Armand as they were leaving the house. The bandit waited until they were out of sight, and then after the servant left the house, and he had questioned the man closely about its inmates, he knocked at the door, and out came Nita, as has been described.

Lum Kee left Nita lying in the hall bound securely, and then he entered the room where Ella was waiting, wondering why her cousin was so long at the door.

As he entered, Ella was just in the act of going to the door. She had drawn her revolver, and now that she had become injured to the dangers through which she was compelled to battle, she was as brave as Nita, and was not afraid of anything.

She met Lum Kee face to face, but did not show the least signs of terror when he said to her in a sneering tone:

"You thought that you were safe out of our reach, but remember one thing, when you try to run away from Chung Wing, that his sentinels never sleep, and can find you wherever you may be."

With that he made a dash forward and tried to grasp Ella, but the girl was too quick for him, for she jumped aside and he fell flat on top of the table, upsetting it and breaking nearly all of the dishes. Ella did not wait to think whether she was strong enough or not, but with the agility of a cat she pounced upon the man's back, placed her pistol to his head and pulled the trigger.

Snap!

There was no explosion. The pistol had missed fire, and she was now at the mercy of the bandit, who was now in a towering rage. Lum Kee bounded to his feet, caught Ella by the hair and dragged her across the whole length of the

room. Her hair would have been pulled completely from her head had she not caught hold of it with both hands and thus saved it.

Ella still had the pistol in her disengaged hand, and she dealt Lum Kee such a blow in the face that he jumped to his feet howling with pain. This gave Ella a chance to regain her feet, and, when she had done so, she rushed towards the door, and would have escaped had not two of Lum Kee's companions, who were with him on the outside of the house, come up the stairway and captured her. She was then bound as Nita had been, and, together with her cousin, she was given in charge to one of the men, while Lum Kee entered the other apartment, and freed the queen.

The party then mounted their horses, and drove away towards the mountains, where they arrived in the afternoon, and Sau ur Neau was welcomed by Chung Wing and the rest of her followers.

The queen, after she had ascended the throne, had Nita and Ella brought before her. Sau ur Neau was not aware of the fact that Clint and Armand were Americans, but she thought that her new grand chancellors were in the employ of the Imperial Government, and that they had abducted her and the girls so that they could get the large reward that had been offered for her capture. They had been baffled, and the queen was now in a good humor, and, as Nita and Ella were brought up before her, she said:

"Do either of you know who the men are who abducted us?"

"No more than you do, your majesty," answered Nita.

"The men treated us very kind and gave us some liberty, but would not permit us to leave the house. This morning Jo Ki and Hop Soon went out and left a servant to guard us. When his masters went away the man said that he wanted us to stay quietly in the room for a short time, while he went out to see a friend. We promised him not to leave the room, but the minute he was out of sight we both concluded that we would unfasten the chains which bound you and then we three could escape. Just as we were about to carry out our plans there came a summons at the door. I answered it, and was seized by Lum Kee. You know what followed, and there is no use in relating anything further."

The queen listened attentively to all that Nita said. She believed the girl, and imagined that she was telling the truth. Even Lum Kee was forced to believe it. Ella had complained to the queen about Lum Kee's actions, and he was severely reprimanded by her majesty. After Nita's story Sau ur Neau did not think much of Lum Kee's actions, for the way she looked at matters now, she would have escaped anyhow without her husband's lieutenant's aid. The queen now turned to Chung Wing and asked, while the girls were standing before the throne:

"Have these girls' friends sent any response to the note that we sent asking for the ransom?"

"The messenger has not yet returned. I expect him in a few days."

"Lum Kee, take these girls to the room where they were confined before they were carried away, and see that a close guard is placed before their room-door, so that they will have no means of escape."

Lum Kee now carried the captives away, and did as the queen had ordered.

He then returned to the main hall, where all the bandits were now gathered, and were listening attentively to what the presidents of the boards were saying in relation to new plans

which were to be set on foot to punish the emperor for some of his breach of contracts.

While they were debating a messenger came in and told the queen that the Imperial army was moving away, and that he had just heard that this was owing to the fact that the emperor had issued orders for General Soon to return immediately to the fort at Nankin.

"Perhaps he has commenced to realize that it does not do to deceive Chung Wing and Sau ur Neau," said the queen, as she ordered her followers to retire, stating that as she was very tired they would defer the discussion until the morrow, when they would consider what they should do in relation to the punishment of the new grand chancellors who had so cleverly deceived them all, and carried off the queen.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PURSUERS MEET GENERAL SOON.

CLINT and Armand did not spare their horses, but made them travel at their full speed all the way from Nankin to Quin Lung, where they arrived just as the Imperial army was preparing to leave.

The presence of the Imperial troops was a surprise to both Armand and Clint, and they made inquiries of several officers about what had been done, and what they intended to do.

They handed the detective a copy of the emperor's orders.

This Clint read, and then asked to be shown to General Soon's head-quarters. When Clint and the general had greeted one another, the detective said:

"General, I see it is the intention of the emperor of giving up all idea of capturing the bandits."

"That seems to be the orders."

"What is the penalty if you disobey the emperor?"

"Instant death."

"That's tough."

"Yes, it is; but why do you ask?"

"Because I thought that you might be able to keep your men in the valley for a few days. I could lead you immediately to a place where we could capture a large number of these bandits."

"It will be impossible for me to break the law."

"Can't you do something?"

The general thought for some time, and then an idea occurred to him.

"I can camp within some miles of here, and if you like you can select a body of experienced men from my own company and then you can carry out your plan, and I will not run any risks."

"I accept this offer, with thanks," said Clint.

They stayed with General Soon until it was dark, and then they started out to reconnoiter and see if they could find out where the girls were confined.

"I think," said Clint, "that perhaps the best plan would be for us to enter the passage in the center of the mountain, and then when everything is quiet we can enter the main portion of the palace."

"I think that if they have the girls confined in any of the rooms, they very likely will place a strong guard on the outside, to prevent them from escaping again," said Armand.

"If that is the case, we will have to devise some means of outwitting the guard," Clint rejoined, as he fumbled around in the bushes to try and find the entrance to the passage. At last his efforts were crowned with success, and he found the door which was so cleverly constructed, and covered so with moss

and stones, that if one did not know of its existence, one could not have been able to find it.

The friends entered the passage, and passed along until they reached the place where they had lost their way a few evenings before. As Clint turned the rays of the dark-lantern upon the opening, Armand and he saw how they had been led astray. The opening to the passage leading to the Chamber of Horrors was built in such a manner that on coming along the main passage, unless one examined the surroundings closely, the opening would be passed by unnoticed. The opening to the passage came in at a turn, and this is how the party made the mistake and lost their way.

Armand and the detective reached the door leading to the main hall without any interruption, and then Clint listened to hear if there was any one stirring in the main hall. Making sure that no one was in the hall, Clint opened the door stealthily, and, followed closely by Armand, he hurried across the hall to the passage leading to the rooms. Once in the passage, they saw that one of the rooms was closely guarded by two stalwart sentinels. The two friends crept into the niche where Clint had found that Armand's mother had hid. They waited impatiently on the alert to see if the guards would leave their post at any time, so that they would be able to enter unobserved the rooms where the girls were confined. At last one of the guards said:

"Ki, isn't it about time that the relief-guard should arrive?"

"In about ten minutes," replied the other sentinel.

"Follow me, Armand," whispered Clint. "I have an idea. We will go to the end of the passage and wait until the relief-guard enters, when we will seize them and then go to those on duty, and represent those that we have secured."

Clint and Armand stationed themselves at the end of the passage, and did not have long to wait before they heard the tramp of the relief-guard.

The minute the guard entered the door, Clint gave Armand the signal, and they both bounded upon the men and bore them to the ground. It was a short struggle, for the men were taken so by surprise that they offered very little resistance, and in a few minutes Clint and Armand had them gagged and tied securely. They then left the men in a dark corner of the passage, and walked along leisurely to the place where the sentinels were anxiously waiting to be relieved. The men thought it was the relief-guard, and so did not challenge Clint and Armand when they drew nigh. The men exchanged a few words with the detective, and then left him and Armand to watch the captives, supposing that everything was correct. The guards left the passage without discovering that they had been deceived, and went direct to Chung Wing, and reported that everything was all right, and that the girls were securely fastened in the room.

Clint waited some time to make sure that everything was still in the palace, and then he tried the door of the girls' room. He found it locked, and the key was no place in sight. It did not take him many minutes to break down the door, and to Nita's surprise, when she awoke suddenly from her slumbers, she saw Armand and Clint standing in the center of the room.

"Be quick," exclaimed Clint; "say not a word, but follow me."

Ella and Nita arose, and after throwing something over their heads they followed Clint and Armand through the main hall, thence into the passage, and out to the mountain-side,

where they mounted their horses, and were soon safely ensconced in a tent in the center of General Soon's camp.

Clint left Armand to protect the girls if anything should happen, and then went direct to the general's tent. As he entered, he found the officer sitting by a table, listening to what a man who was standing in the center of the room was telling him. When Clint approached the place where the officer was sitting, General Soon and the man looked at him, and then the detective recognized the stranger as Lum Kee, Chung Wing's first lieutenant, who had that day rescued Sau ur Neau, and recaptured Nita and Ella. Clint was greatly surprised when he found the bandit and the general together, and he was about to leave the place again when General Soon arose from the table, came forward, shook him by the hand, and offered him a seat by his side. When they were seated the general said to him:

"This man is Chung Wing's lieutenant, Lum Kee; no doubt you know him?"

"I know him," returned Clint.

"He has made a proposition to me which I think is very favorable, and I want to know what you think about it."

"What is it?"

"He says that if the emperor will pardon him for all the crimes that he has committed, give him one half the wealth of the bandits, and a governorship, that he will betray his companions to us, and place them captive in our hands."

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Clint, as he listened to what the general was saying. "If I were you, I would decline the offer, and arrest the fellow."

"Why so?" queried the general, in some surprise.

"Because, by doing as he asks, you place a premium on crime of all descriptions. This fellow has been one of the chief murderers and thieves, and has done more harm than any bandit, except Sau ur Neau and Chung Wing."

Lum Kee could have killed Clint with a good grace. When the detective stopped speaking, the bandit glared at him with the ferocity of a wild animal, and would have pounced upon him if he had dared. Lum Kee's face was clouded, and as soon as he could command his feelings sufficiently, he sneered:

"You talk about traitors. You were the worst of traitors. You abducted the queen and carried off the two American girls. I thwarted you, though, and the girls are now securely locked up in a room of the palace."

"So you think," said Clint, quietly. He turned his back on Lum Kee, and was about to say something to the general, when the bandit noticed the detective's position, drew a long murderous knife from his blouse, and with a bound forward he struck out at Clint's back. The general noticed Lum Kee's action, but was too late to stop him. As luck would have it, just as the knife was about to descend, Clint stepped forward a few steps and escaped the blow. The bandit had struck out with such force that he was precipitated to the floor. Clint turned around instantly, but before he could clutch the would-be assassin Lum Kee was on his feet, and had closed in on him. It was to be a struggle for life, and Clint saw that unless he exerted himself the Chinaman would come out victor, as he was much more muscular than he was. General Soon now rushed to the door of the tent, hoping to stop the struggle by summoning assistance. The officers of the general's staff came rushing into the tent, but none of them were able to get near enough to the combatants to catch hold of either of the men, who were swaying from one side to the other, each with

knives in their hands. Clint and Lum Kee were both slightly wounded, and the blood was flowing over their garments. The bandit wound his foot around Clint's leg, and before the detective could balance himself he fell heavily to the floor. In falling, Clint caught Lum Kee about the arms in such a manner that the bandit was brought down on top of him, and did not have a chance to use his knife.

"Cursed dog," howled Lum Kee, as he struggled furiously and tried to free himself from Clint's embrace. The bandit now put his mouth down to Clint's ear, and caught hold of the upper part between his teeth. The detective cried out in agony, and let go of his hold of Lum Kee. With a part of Clint's ear in his mouth the bandit lifted himself up, placed his knee upon the detective's chest, and then caught his antagonist by the throat with one hand, while with the other he tried to strike a blow with his knife.

Clint now turned over on his side, and his action was so sudden that the bandit was thrown over also, and the blow from the knife fell harmless. Noticing that this had disconcerted Lum Kee, Clint mustered all the strength that he possessed, struck the bandit in the face with his fist, knocked him over, and then jumped to his feet. He picked his knife up, which he had dropped a few minutes before, and then rushed upon Lum Kee, who was preparing for another attack.

"Dog, die!"

Slash, slash, slash!

The blows which the bandit dealt were successfully dodged by Clint.

Slash, slash, slash!

"Back, dog! Ki! Ki!"

It seemed as if the officers who were standing around looking on were fairly riveted to the ground. Several of them had made unsuccessful attempts to grab the combatants, but finally they all came to the conclusion to let them alone and let Clint and Lum Kee fight it out. Both men were bleeding profusely, and the detective's face was completely covered with blood from his wounded ear. Up to this time Clint had been so engaged in trying to defend himself from the fiend's assaults, that he never thought of the pistols that he carried at his waist. Now he pulled a revolver from his belt, and as Lum Kee advanced to strike a blow, he took a hasty aim and pulled the trigger.

Bang!

A cry of anguish followed this, and when the smoke cleared away Clint saw that Lum Kee was lying dead on the floor at his feet. Turning to the general the detective said:

"The world is now rid of one of the fiends of Quin Lung, and before many weeks have been passed I swear to rid China of the balance."

A looking-glass was brought to the detective, and he saw that about a quarter of an inch of his ear had been bitten off. The surgeon belonging to the general's staff was called in, and in a short time he bandaged up Clint's wounds and put some ointment on his ear which stopped it from bleeding.

When this was done, the general had the bandit's body carried out of the tent and buried. He then gave orders to those who had witnessed the fight not to say anything about it. The officers left the tent, and Clint and the general were left alone. After a short time the general said:

"When Chung Wing hears of this affair, he will be furious, and I am afraid that he will carry on his depredations with greater fury."

"I can't understand how it is, that the government is so afraid of this band of bandits?" said Clint.

"You ought to know," returned General Soon, "that the emperor is a man who is very weak-minded and easily frightened. If I were he, I would have had them all captured by this time."

"What do you intend to do to-morrow?"

"Take the command to Nankin."

"Can't you wait for a few days?"

"That will be impossible, unless I receive orders from the emperor to stay."

"I will go to Nankin to-night, and get those orders the first thing in the morning."

Clint shook hands with the general, left the tent, and went to the tent where Armand and the girls were staying. He told them all about what had happened, and what he intended to do.

"I will stay here with the girls," said Armand, when Clint had finished his narrative. "If I thought that I could be of any aid to you, I would go with you, but I think, after the occurrences of yesterday and to-day, that it will not be safe to leave Ella and Nita alone."

"You can go if you want to, Armand," said Nita, "we don't feel the least bit afraid, and then I think that we will be perfectly safe here."

"No, I will stay—Clint will be back before noon, and then we can decide what we will do."

Clint now bid his friends good-bye, and as he shook Ella's hand he squeezed it and looked longingly into her eloquent eyes. The glance was returned by Ella, whose handsome face was covered with blushes. Armand and Nita noticed this, but said nothing.

The detective mounted his horse, and before daylight he arrived at Nankin. After breakfast he presented himself at the palace, and by showing the passport, he was admitted immediately to the emperor's presence.

Jow Zoon was surprised when he heard what the detective had done, and after thinking for a long while, during which it seemed to Clint, as he watched the man's countenance, that the emperor was debating with himself about what course he should pursue, he finally said:

"You can return to General Soon and tell him that I am willing for him to do whatever you may suggest."

The emperor sat down at his table and wrote out a commission, which he handed to Clint, saying:

"This empowers you and your friend to assume full command of the Imperial forces during this campaign, and if you can capture the bandits and rid the country of them, you can have one half of the wealth that you say the underground palace contains."

If the emperor would keep his word this would make both Clint and Armand very wealthy. The stake was a large one, and worth working for, and as Clint drove away from the palace he determined that he would rest neither night nor day until he had accomplished the task.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CAPTURE.

CLINT reached the camp before noon, and, after he had shown the commissions, General Soon was perfectly satisfied for him and Armand to assume command. The general, Clint and Armand held a council of war, and concluded that it would be best to send the girls to Nankin under an escort.

General Soon very kindly offered them the hospitality of his house, which they gladly accepted. It did not take Nita and Ella long to prepare for their journey, and when they were ready, and after they had bade Armand and Clint adieu, they left the camp with an escort of fifty soldiers, commanded by the general's son, and it was not many hours before they were safely lodged in the general's house. The house was a large building, situated on the left side of the palace, and was built of granite.

The room that was given to the girls was on the second floor, and overlooked the gardens surrounding the palace.

Every attention was shown them as the general's guests, and they did not express a wish but what was attended to immediately, and whatever they desired was brought to them.

Clint and his companions finally come to the conclusion that they would wait until midnight before they undertook to do anything. It was agreed upon that the soldiers were to be divided into four commands; the first, under Armand, was to enter the entrance near the village; the second, under General Soon, was to enter the entrance in the center of the mountains; the third, under Clint, was to enter the entrance through the cave; and the fourth, under the general's son, Lou Tow, was to enter the House of Refreshments, and make his way to the main hall. Armand drew up four plans and handed one to each of those taking command, so that when they commenced the attack it would be systematic, and no mistakes would be made. Guards were placed at each entrance, so that if any of the bandits made their appearance at the openings they would be captured. The great difficulty under which General Soon had labored in his campaign was that he was not acquainted with the ground, and did not know anything about the entrances to the underground palace.

In the palace active preparations were being made to make another raid upon the surrounding country. No one had left the stronghold for hours, and neither the queen nor king were aware of the fact that their abode was about to be invaded.

Sau ur Neau and Chung Wing had discovered that the girls had disappeared, and that Lum Kee was no place to be found. This time they supposed that the lieutenant had run off with the captives. Being so intent upon their plans, they did not have much time to think about the disappearance of Nita and Ella. This raid was to be the greatest and most extensive that the bandits had ever participated in.

It was Sau ur Neau's intention to enter the emperor's palace and murder Jow Zoon. When this was done she and Chung Wing were going to seize the throne, and then compel the people to proclaim them emperor and empress. The scheme was a bold one, and the most daring that had ever been thought of by any person during the whole history of Nankin as the residence of the emperor.

"That cursed hound must die," exclaimed Sau ur Neau, as she stood on the throne and harangued her followers, who cheered her until they howled themselves hoarse.

"He has deceived us," she cried; "he has set spies upon our tracks, and therefore he is not entitled to live any longer. We will seize his throne, and then we will show the people that they will not have as easy a time under our reign as they did under Jow Zoon's. The nobles must die also, and the more you kill the more places will be made vacant for you."

With that the queen descended the throne, and after waving her hand to those who were attending her, she withdrew to

her room to dress for the expedition which she was going to start out on.

The bandits were dismissed until midnight, when they were to form into companies under competent leaders, when they would commence their journey to Nankin, where they hoped to gain not only more wealth, but also more power. Every one was sanguine of success, and when they returned to the guard-room, large bumpers of wine were set out, and the bandits enjoyed themselves by toasting the expedition so much that a large number of them became drunk.

When Sau ur Neau came into the guard-room and saw the condition, which her men were in, she was furious, and without waiting for an explanation from the major in command, she drew her sword and cut his head off. Taking the head in her hands by the hair, she twirled her finger around the queue, and then whirled the sickening object around her head in the sight of her followers, and said:

"All who disobey my orders may expect the same fate as the major."

Instantly the men stopped drinking, and so great was Sau ur Neau's influence over them, that most who were almost stupidly drunk, sobered up, when they saw that if they should show any signs of the debauch they would suffer the same as the major.

"Hark! What's that?" exclaimed the queen, as she was about to leave the guard-room.

A rumbling noise was heard in the distance, and sounded like the tramp of many feet.

"Are any of the men out?" queried the queen.

"None," replied an officer standing by her side.

"To arms, then!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

The sound of the tramping came from all quarters of the palace. The queen was bewildered, and for a few minutes she hardly knew how to act.

"Be quick! the Imperialists are on us. Every man——" cried Chung, as he entered the guard-room, out of breath.

"What's that you say?" asked Sau ur Neau, who had recovered her composure, and was now mustering the forces.

"No quarter is to be shown to the hounds!" she cried, as she drew her ponderous sword from her side and waved it around her head.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

The sound of the advance of the Imperialists drew nearer and nearer every minute.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

They were now within a few feet of the guard-room. The door was now thrown open, and the moment afterwards Clint entered the room at the head of a body of soldiers. At this moment the other door of the room opened, and Armand entered, closely followed by the general and his division.

The bandits and the soldiers were armed mostly with swords and battle axes, while Clint Armand and the general were the only ones who carried revolvers.

Crack! crack! crack!

Three stalwart bandits fell dead. At this Sau ur Neau cried:

"Butcher the dogs! Chop them to pieces! On, my braves, on!"

These words sent a thrill through the men, and fighting was commenced on all sides. Sau ur Neau, seeing Clint, signaled him out, rushed toward him and engaged him in combat. Chung Wing pounced upon Armand, and no doubt would have

cut him in two, so sudden was the assault, had it not been that the young man jumped back and parried the blow with his sword.

Clash, clash, clash, clash!

Clash, clash, clash, clash!

"Help!"

"Chop them to pieces!"

"Show them no quarter!"

"Give the fiends all that they deserve!"

The conflict was a furious one. The bandits fought like demons, and the dead and wounded Imperialists, as well as a great many of the robbers, were piled up in every part of the room. Blood flowed in streams over the floor, and made it slippery.

Armand's foot slipped, and he fell on his knees. Chung Wing was down upon him like a vulture.

Whi-r-r!

Clash!

Armand met the blow with his sword, and an instant afterwards the bandit's weapon fell from his grasp.

"Surrender!" cried Armand, as he placed the point of his sword at Chung Wing's breast, and then pointed his pistol at the bandit's head.

One would have thought that this would have been enough to make the arch-fiend himself surrender if he were not armed; but not so with Chung Wing.

The bandit stepped back a few paces, and then like a flash of lightning he lowered his head and rushed forward, clutched Armand around the waist, and threw him to the floor. Undoubtedly this would have been the last of the brave young man, had not the general seen the bandit throw himself on top of Armand and prepare to stab him with a dagger. General Soon's sword was whirled around his head with tremendous force, and just as Chung Wing was about to deal the blow, his head fell to the floor, and his body rolled off of Armand's breast.

"So dies the man who never knew what it was to be merciful, and who has held China in chains of fear for years," cried General Soon, as he assisted Armand to arise. There had come a lull in the fight, and Armand saw that the queen was pushing Clint hard in the other end of the room. The bandits had lost heavily, and now only about twenty-five remained. There were about thirty left out of the two hundred soldiers that had entered the room. The general's son had fallen in the action.

"Come, let us help Clint, and try and capture the queen alive," said Armand, when he saw that his friend's strength was giving out.

The general and Armand now cut their way through the bandits, who had gathered together in a square in the center of the room, until they reached Clint's side.

The moment that they stepped up the detective's foot slipped and he fell. Sau ur Neau raised her sword above her head; as she did so Armand brought his weapon around and cut the queen's hand off at the wrist. The sword fell with a thud, and Sau ur Neau gave a cry that was full of anguish. The general and Armand then threw themselves upon her, and with a silken cord tied her hand and foot.

When the bandits saw that their queen had been made a captive, they tried to rescue her but failed in the attempt, being cut down by the Imperialists, who now made them all prisoners. After this was done, Clint gave orders for those who remained of his party to return to the camp. They then

took the prisoners with them, and after placing a strong guard in the cave, they set out immediately for Nankin. It was bright daylight when Armand and Clint left the underground palace, and almost noon when they arrived in Nankin with the prisoners.

The emperor had just arisen from his bed when the friends entered the palace leading Sau ur Neau between. When Jow Zoon saw the bandit queen and heard about what had occurred, he threw his arms around Clint's neck and exclaimed:

"You are a mighty general, and if you stay with me I will make you secretary of military affairs."

"I would like to accept your offer," said Clint; "but I am compelled to return to my own country."

The emperor then offered the office to Armand, but he, too, refused. Jow Zoon hardly knew what he could do to express his gratitude to the two Americans.

"Well, then, if you won't accept an office under my government, you surely will live at the palace during your stay in Nankin?"

The friends accepted this offer, and the emperor gave orders for the best rooms in the palace to be prepared for their use.

They immediately commenced to remove the money and valuables from the underground palace to the palace of the emperor. The greater portion of the wealth had been removed from the underground palace, and nothing now remained except some silks and the inlaid precious stones on the floor. The morning after the fight, as some of the guards were preparing to enter the cave, they heard a low, rumbling sound, and a few minutes afterward the whole mountain commenced to shake. There came a fearful crash, the noise of which echoed and re-echoed throughout the valley. A hollow place appeared on the side of the mountain, and long gorges were formed in the places where the entrances to Sau ur Neau's palace had been a few hours before. The bandits' stronghold was no more. The earthquake had caused the earth to open and swallow everything up.

When the inhabitants of Nankin and the surrounding country heard of the extermination of the bandits and the capture of Sau ur Neau, there was great rejoicing, and every place that Clint and Armand went they were received like princes. The emperor was as good as his word, and divided the money and valuables equally. It seemed as if he could not do too much for the comfort of Armand and Clint.

Both the detective and Armand were never happy unless they were with the girls who were still the guests of General Soon. One evening, about a week after the capture of Sau ur Neau, Clint and Ella were walking up and down a quiet path in General Soon's garden. The detective's arm was around Ella's waist, while her hands were clasped about his neck, as she nestled her head in his bosom.

"Ella, will you be my wife? I love you far better than any one on earth."

The question did not startle Ella. She looked up into Clint's face, her eyes speaking more than words could express; she drew his face down to hers, imprinted a kiss on his lips, and said, as she placed her hand in that of her lover:

"Yes, Clint (I can never call you anything else, dear), I will be your wife."

The detective was happy, and drew his promised bride to his bosom after she said this, and kissed her.

General Soon happened to be passing down a path by the side of the one where the lovers were standing. He overheard the conversation, and saw all that happened. He went immediately to the emperor, who dispatched a messenger to Clint, stating that he desired to see him and Armand without delay. The two friends posted off in haste to the palace, wondering what Jow Zoon could want. When they entered the room where the emperor and the general were, they were greatly surprised when Jow Zoon stepped forward and said, as he grasped both of them by the hand:

"Allow me to congratulate you both on your choice—and I would like very much for you to have the marriage ceremonies performed at court."

The friends wondered how the emperor had found out about their engagements, when General Soon settled their minds on that question by acknowledging that he had been guilty of informing on them.

A few afternoons after this the whole city was decorated with flags and gay streamers. The streets were crowded with people, and soldiers in full uniform rode up and down as if something great was going to happen. The imperial court was crowded with noblemen and ladies; the emperor was in full State costume, and was sitting on his throne. Suddenly the doors of the palace were thrown open, an American missionary entered with a prayer-book in his hand, and was closely followed by Armand De Witt and Nita Lloyd, Joseph Clinton and Ella West. The bridal party stopped before the throne, the minister read the marriage ceremony, and in a few minutes Armand, Clint, Nita, and Ella were made happy for life. They received the congratulations of those present, and participated in the grand dinner which the emperor had had prepared in honor of the occasion.

The next day Sau ur Neau was executed, together with those of her followers who had been made prisoners with her.

Clint, Armand, Nita and Ella now took their departure from Nankin, and started out for Canton, taking with them the money which they had so well earned. The emperor sent an escort with them, after he saw that nothing could induce them to remain at his court. After spending some time at Canton among their acquaintances, the happy husbands, with their wives, set sail for America. They visited all the places of note in the United States, and then went to Europe, where they stayed for two years. They then returned home, and took up their residences in San Francisco, where two magnificent houses had been built and furnished for them, for which they gave an order to a contractor before they left for Europe. Armand and Clint entered into the banking business together, after the detective had resigned from the police force, and they are now known and respected by every one in the community in which they reside.

[THE END.]

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